

SUMMER 2016

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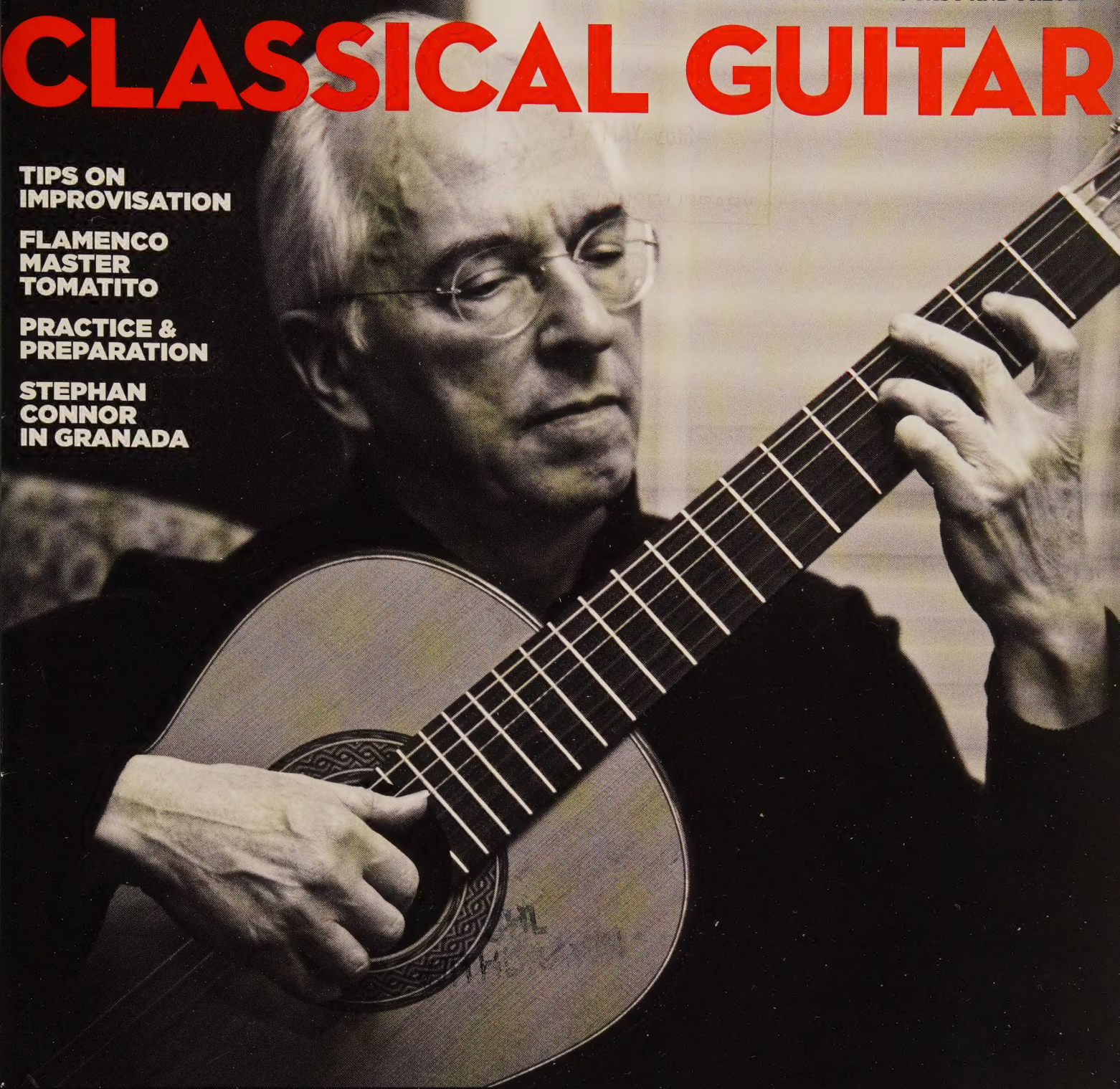
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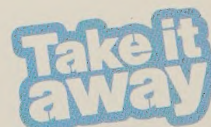
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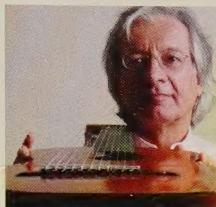
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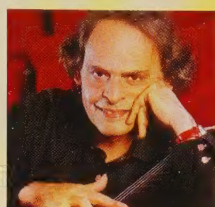
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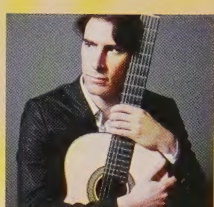
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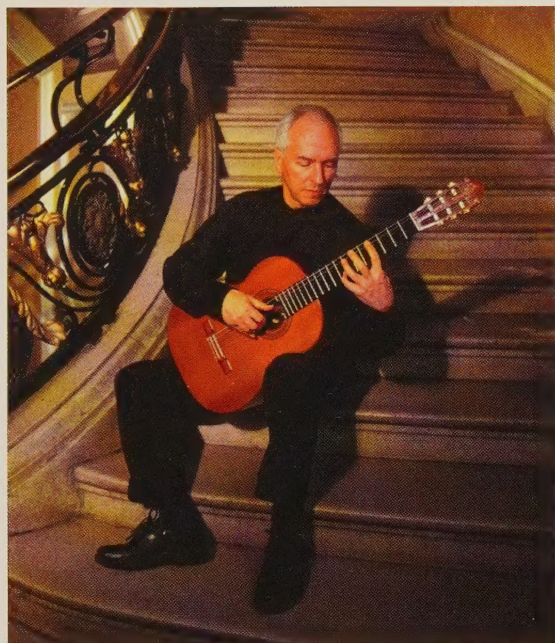
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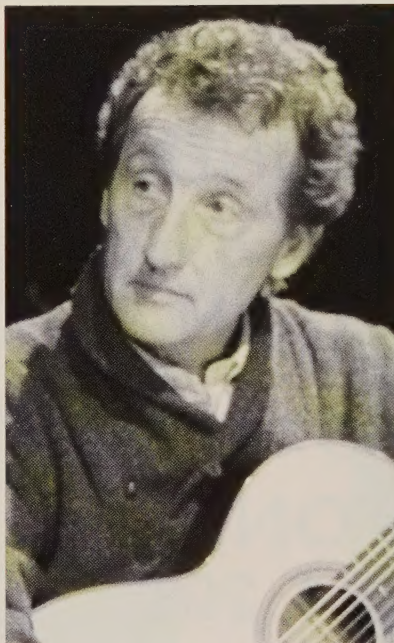
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CONTENTS SUMMER 2016

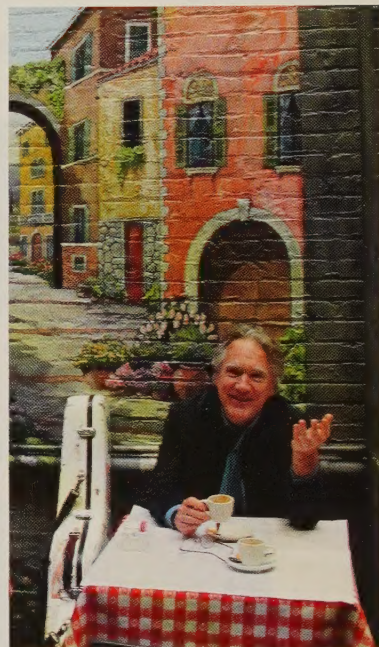
FEATURES



- 26** **John Williams**
Reflections on five
decades of recordings
by Thérèse Wassily Saba



- 32** **Guitar Maverick**
John Schneider's intriguing
tuning explorations
by Giacomo Fiore



- 36** **Benjamin Verdery**
Playing and composing
outside the box
by Christopher Mallett

SPECIAL FOCUS LUTHIERS PAST & PRESENT



- 42 Momentito**
The art of the guitar maker
by Graham Wade

- 44 Reverberations**
Collector Sheldon Urlik's superb
book on Spanish guitars
by Blair Jackson

- 48 Gernot Wagner**
On double-tops and his influences
by Thérèse Wassily Saba

- 52 Spanish Immersion**
An American luthier in Granada
by Stephan Connor

ON THE COVER **JOHN WILLIAMS** PHOTOGRAPHER **JEFFREY HARRINGTON** CLASSICAL GUITAR SUMMER 2016 ISSUE 382

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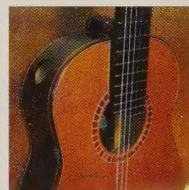
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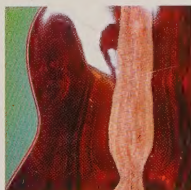
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CONTENTS SUMMER 2016

NEWS

10

CG News

Summer festivals;
a kids' CD about guitar;
books on guitar player-composers;
Peter Maxwell Davies dies

14

View from the Front Row

Classical-guitar
ambassador Virginia Luque
by Blair Jackson

18

Keepers of the Flamenco

Modern Masters,
Pt. 2: Tomatito
by Jason Webster

20

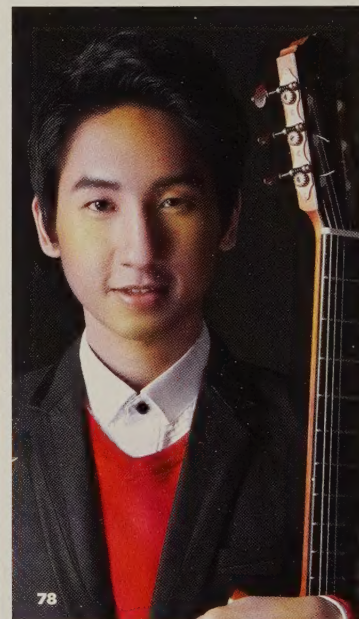
Letter From...

Australia's guitar scene
by Guitar Trek

24

High Society

Guitar Society
Summit educates
and inspires
by Blair Jackson



PLAY

60 Formula for Success

Winging It: Tips on improvisation
from top guitarists
by John W. Warren

64 Rehearsal Room

The Goal Is Expression:
The art of practice and preparation
by Mark Small

68 Method

Enhance your technique
by digging into Villa-Lobos
by Rhayn Jooste

REVIEWS

74 Tools of the Trade

The Alvarez AC65HCE blends elements
of classical- and steel-string guitars
by Adam Perlmutter

76 Discs

Brouwer specialist Ali Arango, Pepe Romero and
Daniel Ho's *Aloha España*, Matthew McAllister,
Ekachai Jearakul, *Royal Winter Music*, and more

84 Print

Sebastien Llinares' *Trois Bagatelles*, Goss celebrates
Bizet, two concertinos by Guido Santórsola, David
Gaudreau guitar ensemble piece, and more

90 Stage

A fine tribute to Paco de Lucía in London

MISCELLANY

8 From the Editor

92 Competition and
Festival Listings

97 Ad Index

98 The Last Word

BONUS STAGE & STUDIO

- Learn how to command the stage
- Essential extras for your gig
- Collaboration through digital tools
- Acoustic Instrument Celebration



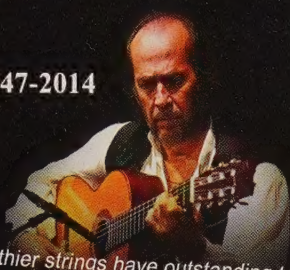
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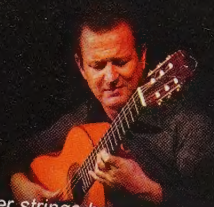
Jorge Morel

1947-2014



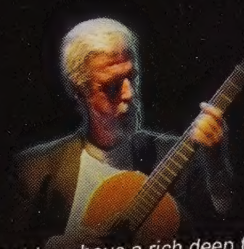
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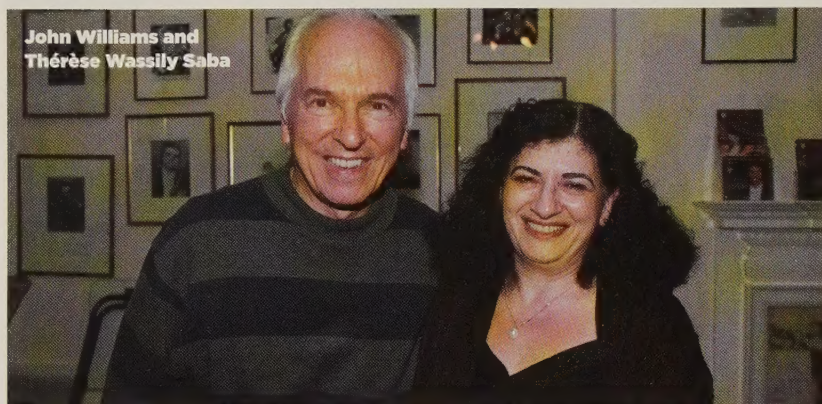
Jose Luis Merlin



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



John Williams and
Thérèse Wassily Saba

This marks the tenth time that John Williams has graced the cover of *Classical Guitar* magazine since 1985—a testament to both his historic importance and his enduring relevance. The last three of those cover stories (including this one) were written by Thérèse Wassily Saba, one of several writers based in England who played key roles in the magazine for many years before the 2015 changeover from a monthly published in the UK to a quarterly based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Few writers are as conversant with the world of classical guitar as Thérèse, so she was the perfect choice to elicit some new stories and insights from the esteemed Mr. Williams, who rarely grants interviews.

I confess that I learned only very recently that Thérèse and Williams share more than just a deep love and tremendous knowledge of the guitar; they are both natives of Australia. Williams, whose father was English, moved to London at the age of 11. Thérèse was born of Lebanese parents in Sydney and has been deeply involved in music for most of her life, playing in Australian theatrical productions and a group called the Renaissance Players (where she played guitar, oud, mandolin, and mandora), before getting a B.A. in music and Arabic from the University of Sydney. She studied guitar intensively with José Luis González in

Alcoy, Spain, and also took master classes with Gordon Crosskey, David Russell, and Hubert Kappel.

She moved to London in 1989 and soon landed a position as an apprentice writer and part-time assistant to *Classical Guitar*'s visionary Features and News Editor, Colin Cooper. She learned much from working with Cooper, and when he and his wife Maureen moved to Italy in 1991, Thérèse was the natural choice to fill the News Editor role—a job she held until the magazine was sold in the fall of 2014. She wrote countless stories along the way, interviewing practically every major player in the field, and covering the news in depth. Somehow she also found time to become founding editor of *Flamenco International* and to write regularly for *Gendai Guitar* in Japan. She has also worked as a freelance copy editor, writer, and translator (Spanish, Arabic, et al) for more than 20 years, and teaches classical guitar and music theory to private students.

In this issue alone, the versatile Thérèse contributed three very different articles: the Williams interview, a technical conversation with the influential German luthier Gernot Wagner, and a review of a London concert honoring the late flamenco legend Paco de Lucía. The magazine is lucky to have her on board!

—Blair Jackson

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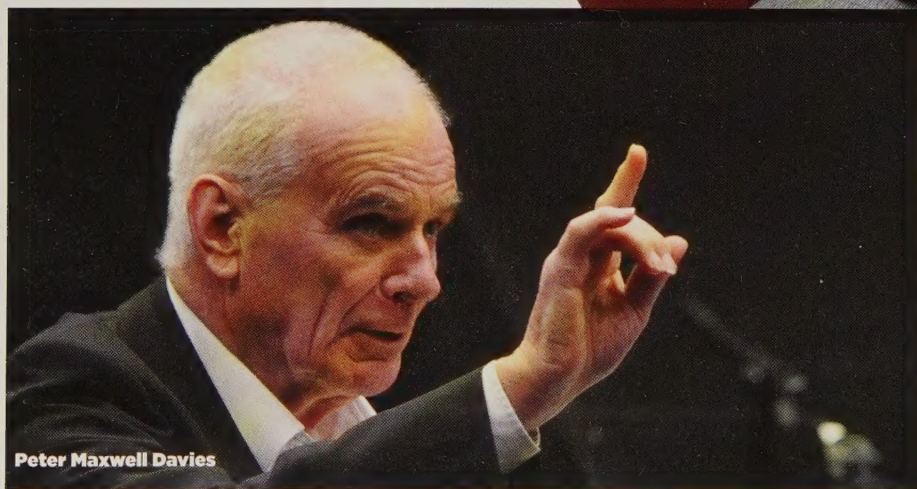
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SWING INTO FESTIVAL SEASON

Summer is almost here, which means the peak season for classical guitar festivals and competitions has arrived—after a strong start in April and early May with annual events in London, Philadelphia, Long Island (NY), Toronto, and Koblenz, Germany, to name a few.

Among the many high-profile fests coming up in the next few months are the prestigious **JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition** in Buffalo, NY, June 8–11; the Guitar Foundation of America's annual confab, this year in Denver, Colorado, June 21–25, featuring such top names as **Jason Vieaux**, **Raphaella Smits**, **Duo Melis**, and **Benjamin Verdery** (who is featured on page 36); and, celebrating its 25th anniversary August 20–26, the **West Dean International Classical Guitar Festival and Summer School**, in lovely West Sussex, England—featuring **Berta Rojas**, **Irina Kulikova**, the **Aquarelle Guitar Quartet**, and **Ben Verdery**, among others.

For more festivals/competitions and contact info on these, go to page 92.



NOTED COMPOSER PETER MAXWELL DAVIES DIES AT 81

One of Britain's most famous (and occasionally controversial) contemporary composers, **Sir Peter Maxwell Davies**, has died at the age of 81 after a long bout with leukemia.

He wrote more than 300 works, including ten symphonies, several operas (including two aimed at children), chamber pieces, string quartets and sextets, concertos,

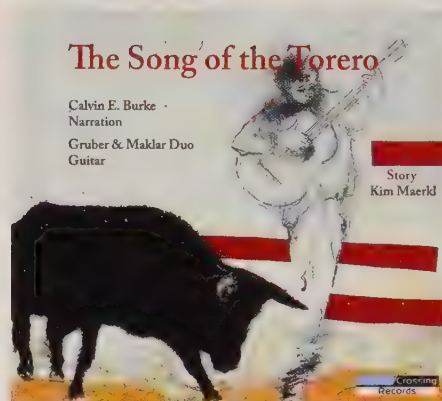


Gruber & Makler Duo

A KIDS' CD ABOUT CLASSICAL GUITAR (AND BULLFIGHTING)

Looking for a way to get a child interested in classical-guitar music? A wonderful CD that kids will love is *The Song of the Torero*, which features a charming story by Kim Maerkl about a young boy who lives near Barcelona and wants to become a musician—in fact he spends all his spare time with a friend playing their classical guitars together—but his father enrolls him in a school to become a *torero*, or bullfighter. Much of the tale is about young Bernardo's love of the guitar and the inner turmoil he feels at being forced against his will to become a bullfighter. (Bernardo and his friend Carlos secretly go to the bull stables at night and play guitar music to soothe the beasts.) Throughout the story, there are marvelous interludes of guitar music played by the **Gruber & Makler Duo**, including works by Joaquín Rodrigo, Enrique Granados, Isaac Albéniz, Manuel de Falla, and Miguel Llobet; 15 in all. The story is engaging, the music sublime, the production values impressive.

The Song of the Torero was originally written in German, and the Gruber & Makler Duo have performed it in concert in German, but for the this CD release on the German Atlantic Crossing label it was translated into English and narrated by Calvin E. Burke. "It is part of our series 'The Art of Stories and Music,'" Maerkl says. "We are



trying to produce unique and high-quality recordings for children combining narration and music. We hope to ignite the interest of a young audience for classical music.

"*The Torero* can also be performed with an actor and just one guitarist," she continues. "The illustrator and animator Claude Grosch has created illustrations for the story, and Gruber & Maklar have often performed the piece with the illustrations beamed on the wall behind them."

Atlantic Crossing has put out several other kids' stories-with-music—also written by Maerkl—including *Mozart's Magical Nights* (piano and orchestra), *Stradivari's Gift* (violin; narration by Sir Roger Moore!), *The Snake Charmer* (clarinet played by Maerkl, guitar by Gruber, and tabla), and several others. For more info about the series, or to get a free teacher's guide to the CD (including the complete story) go to atlantic-crossing.com.

sonatas for different instruments, film scores, and more.

He also wrote numerous works that used classical guitars, including his 1984 *Guitar Sonata*, a moody, modern-sounding solo piece; and "Dark Angels," for soprano voice and guitar; as well as other opera and chamber pieces. Davies' best-known "guitar" piece was actually written for piano—a sonorous, haunting ballad called "Farewell to Stromness." (Check out Matthew McAllister's version on YouTube.) Look for more on Davies in the next issue of *CG*.



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COSTE, MOREL, AND BARRIOS IN THE CG BOOKBAG

There are always fresh and interesting aspects of classical-guitar history to be uncovered, and new books are occasionally overlooked, so here's a glimpse of three promising projects that might appeal to folks looking to dig deep.

You'll need strong forearms to haul around Ari van Vliet's brand-new, two-volume, hard-cover tome, *Napoléon Coste: Composer and Guitarist in the Musical Life of 19th Century Paris*, which must be the definitive work on the influential and important French guitarist, Romantic composer, and transcriber of earlier works onto the instrument. The massive, large-format work—originally put together as van Vliet's PhD dissertation for his studies at Utrecht University in Holland—consists of three items: A volume titled "Biography" offers a detailed, copiously illustrated (and annotated) look at Coste's life and career, and the creative milieu in which he worked; plus a descriptive analysis of his works, with many musical examples. A second, slightly smaller "Thematic Catalogue" is filled with charts and tables that break down Coste's works even further—by opus number (if applicable), what is known about a given piece's dedicatee (if any), recordings, publishing information, etc. The third component of the overall work is a CD of author van Vliet playing more than an hour of Coste's music—three multi-part pieces—on a copy of the composer's heptacorde (seven-string) René Lacôte guitar from 1856, complete with gut strings, as the original guitar would have had. The whole package goes for €75 (\$85), and can be

purchased by sending an email inquiry (labeled "Biography Coste") to info@cumuli.nl. More info is available at cumuli.nl.

Considerably less weighty, but certainly worth mentioning, is the recent e-book biography, *Jorge Morel: The Remarkable Journey of a Legendary Guitarist/Composer*, written by J. Vincent Moran (with a foreword by *Classical Guitar* magazine founder, and producer of some Morel discs, Maurice Summerfield). The Argentina-born Morel is one of the greatest living composers of music for the guitar, and is also well known for his many imaginative guitar arrangements of everything from George Gershwin to Dave Brubeck to Leonard Bernstein songs from *West Side Story* to the Beatles. This is the first full-length biography of Morel, who has lived in New York for much of his long and storied career. The Kindle e-book is available through Amazon.com.

Finally, a belated tip of the cap to another Kindle-format e-book, *Agustín Barrios in Dreamland: The Amazing Journey of a Paraguayan Guitarist in Brazil*, by Cyro Delvisio. This work concentrates on Barrios' life-altering tours of Brazil, based on the author's exhaustive research in period newspapers and other historical documents, building upon the foundation of Rico Stover's earlier works on the composer/guitarist. Delvisio gave a fascinating talk about his findings at the 2015 Guitar Foundation convention in Oklahoma City, illustrating musical points with his own guitar-playing of several Barrios pieces. Again, the e-book is available through Amazon.com.



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VIRGINIA LUQUE

Segovia's last private pupil has become a nonstop ambassador for classical guitar

by Blair Jackson

These are exciting times for internationally acclaimed classical and flamenco guitarist, composer, conductor, and teacher Virginia Luque. In the past year alone the Spanish native has released several first-rate CDs on her blossoming Iberia Productions label: the solo guitar *Homage to Agustín Barrios*; *Spanish Masterworks for the Guitar* (which includes the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, performed with the London Symphony Orchestra); *A Christmas Feeling*, consisting of instrumental duets with versatile jazz/blues guitarist Jack Pearson; and *All Mozart*, a disc of her conducting the Moravian Philharmonic Olomouc on the well-known *Symphony No. 40 in G minor* and *Piano Concerto #21 in C major* (featuring the Latin Grammy-winning Sonia Rubinsky). The coming year promises more, too, including *All About Bach, Vol. 1*; *Passions*—duets with Bulgarian violinist Bojidara Kouzmanova on works by Enrique Granados, Manuel de Falla, Heitor Villa-Lobos, and more; and a duo CD called *A Due* with Grammy-winning soprano Ana Maria Martinez.

"I've had a lot of projects in my mind all these years," Luque says by phone from her Manhattan home (she also still spends much time in Spain). "My desire was to collaborate with musicians I always wanted to work with—great players and great friends. I said, 'Let's make music!' and I put my production company together so I could get my ideas out."

And she's brimming with ideas. In April she's scheduled to record a disc of Spanish and Latin American music, called *Apassionata*, with mezzo soprano Nancy Fabiola Herrera, who studied at New York's Juilliard School of Music at the same time as





Luque and Ana Maria Martinez. Then she'll go into the studio with a soprano from Texas, Elisa Brown, to record a disc of Latin American folksongs, *A mi alma latina*; and she's also hoping to squeeze in two guitar projects—one devoted to her arrangements of pieces by Isaac Albéniz, and the other her take on Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, which she describes as "the most intellectual work I've ever done."

Down the line she is planning discs devoted to contemporary composing giants such as Leo Brouwer, Carlo Domeniconi, and Jorge Morel, as well as Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Manuel Ponce, Granados, Francisco Tárrega, and Federico Moreno Torroba ("who not that many people play these days," she notes). Additionally, she's preparing for a disc of tangos, another of her own flamenco compositions, and also one of her classical compositions.

In recent years, Luque founded both Music for Life NYC—a nonprofit humanitarian organization—and, as its musical arm, the New York Women's Philharmonic, which is made up of top players from various US orchestras, chamber groups, and soloists. Luque is the music director and conductor for the group, which raises money for various charities.

In short, Luque is a *very* busy woman. "I've been balancing my solo and orchestra performances with my recording schedule," she says. "I also have private students at the Guitar Salon when I'm in New York City."

Luque has come a long way since she grew up in the beautiful coastal town of Algeciras, in the Cadiz region on the southern tip of Spain, near Gibraltar. It's an area where guitar has a long history, but even so, few would have predicted that Virginia would take up the guitar so young. "I was obsessed with it," she says. "When I was four I was given a beginner's guitar, and I started playing it and couldn't stop. My father said, 'Well, if she goes to bed and sleeps with it, there's something going on.'" By the age of six she was studying flamenco with a teacher, and she performed in public for the first time at age seven.

"Algeciras was all-flamenco," she says. "There was no conservatory, so flamenco was what you learned. Eventually my flamenco teacher advised me, 'I think you should learn classical,' because flamenco was related somehow to dark, smoky places and not recommended by society at that time, especially for little girls. It has changed a lot, obviously. So after a while I went to the conservatory in [nearby] Málaga."

VIEW FROM THE FRONT ROW

Luque also got the opportunity to study with the legendary Andrés Segovia, who happened to share a friend with Virginia's father. The friend introduced Virginia to Segovia and she became the Maestro's last private pupil. Luque says that even when Segovia was quite elderly, he always managed to find time to offer advice and incisive critiques to promising young players.

"I had a great experience with him," she recalls. "He was sort of like a grandfather. He did, as people say, have a strong temper and could be demanding, but we shared an Andalusian sense of humor that made our work easier. But also, I was demanding with myself; maybe too much.

"By the time I got to Segovia, I had been through different stages of doubt and questioning—maybe I should change this and change that. During several summers, or when he was not on tour, I used to stay in Madrid and study with him for five hours a day; a very stressful time, as you can imagine. I tried to imitate his sound by imitating his position, but he said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I don't know, Maestro. I don't have a clue! I just want your sound.'" She laughs at the recollection. "He said, 'No, you have to develop your sound with your hands, and your hands are perfect.' Since my right-hand position was fine, I developed my sound from that point on."

Though Luque had already earned a master's degree at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Málaga, Segovia was among those who urged her to go to New York to "internationalize my career," which eventually led to her to enrolling in the master's program at Juilliard. How much did her studies at Juilliard differ from those at the Conservatorio in Spain? "It was totally different," she says. "In Spain, it was a very methodical learning experience. You build your basics from the beginning and you learn certain studies and methods—music theory, harmony, composition, chamber music. There are a lot subjects you have to accomplish to get a degree, and it was eight years, compared with two years at Juilliard. By the last days of the eight years you want to run away—I don't want to hear another note!" she laughs. "So on one hand it seems very rigid—going through the books—but you actually learn if you have good teachers.



WHAT SHE PLAYS

Virginia Luque's main guitar for both recording and performing is a 1933 Hermann Hauser I that she bought a number of years ago from a private collector in Germany. It has a spruce top and Brazilian rosewood back and sides. Her other guitars include a 2004 Manuel Velazquez, a 1960 Arcangel Fernandez flamenco, a 1986 Joaquin Garcia, a spruce Pedrini, and a maple Lubos Naprstek.

When you start out over this course, you're nobody, and you build who you are and you build your career.

"At Juilliard there was much more freedom to develop my musical expertise, as I already had the musical foundation from Spain. I was already a concert guitarist before Juilliard, so actually it was a little hard for me to become a student again."

These days, besides her concert and recording career, "teaching others how to play is very rewarding"—as it has been since she was 12.

Luque is also the artistic director of the 44th annual International Guitar Seminar, taking place August 6–13, 2016, in

Reisbach, Germany, and sponsored by the Hermann Hauser Guitar Foundation, with the active support of legendary luthier Hermann Hauser III and his daughter, Kathrin Hauser IV, a fine luthier as well. The festival consists of concerts, master classes, and lectures. Among the special guests this year is Andrew York, who will perform and teach a master class. Parallel to the IGS in Reisbach is the seventh International Bach Guitar Competition—founded by Japanese guitarist Masayuki Kato—for which Luque always participates as a juror.

"I really love teaching," she says. "I like to be able to give others the kind of help I wish I'd had when I was starting out." **CG**



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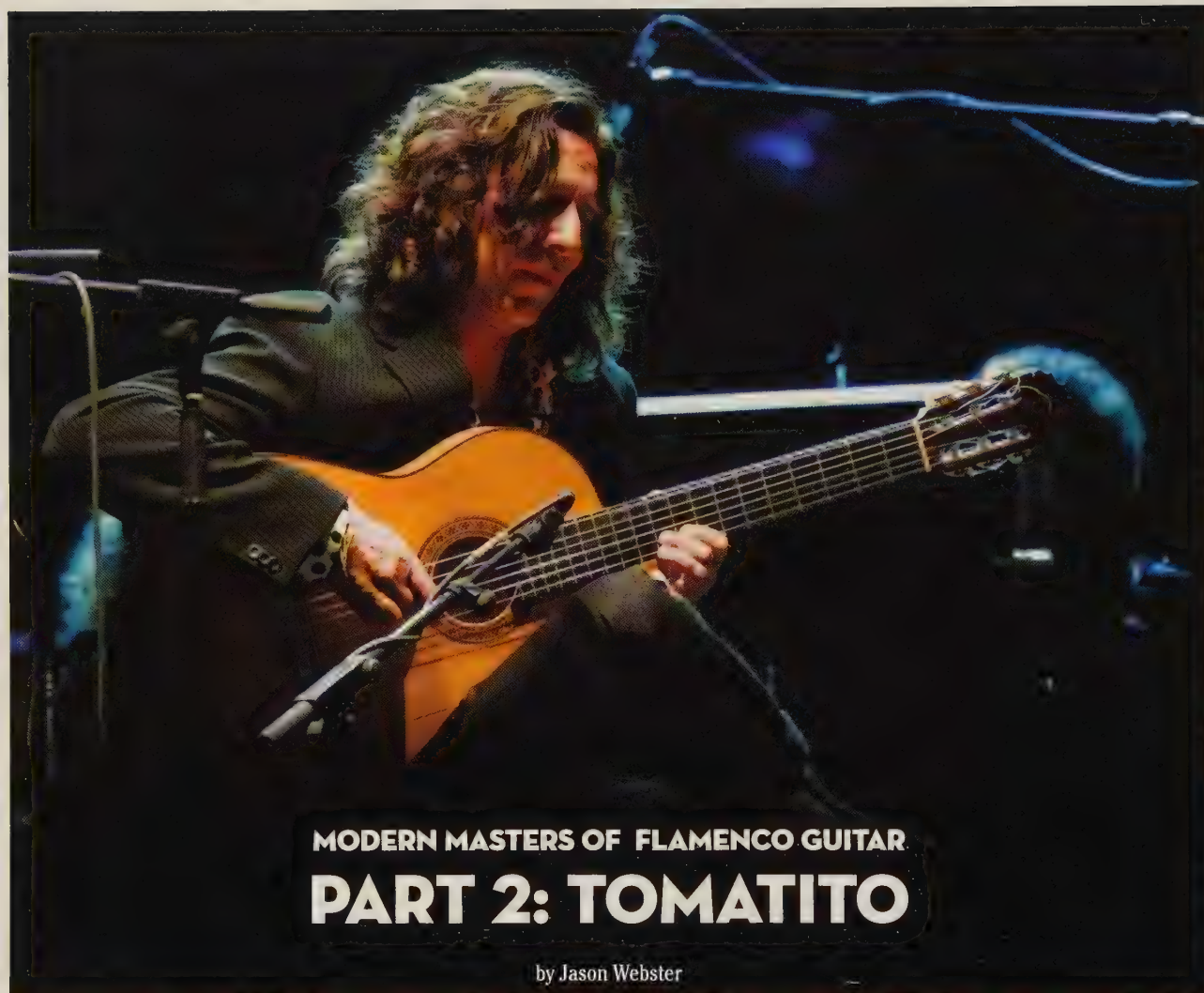
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KEEPERS OF THE FLAMENCO



The Gypsy influence on flamenco is one of the art form's most important ingredients. The playful fieriness and "otherness" of the music can almost certainly be traced to this well-established, yet often marginalized, group in Spanish society. Musicologists may find elements from Byzantine, Moorish, and other Mediterranean styles in the general flamenco mix, yet it is the unique Gypsy spark that makes flamenco one of the world's most important musical legacies. Underlying this influence is the fact that a large percentage of the great flamenco singers have hailed from Gypsy backgrounds, as have many dancers. Among guitarists, however, Gypsies have generally been less represented. Perhaps the most celebrated exception is the Almería-born

genius José Fernández Torres, better known by his *apodo*, Tomatito ("little tomato").

As is so often the case with flamenco greats, Tomatito grew up in a flamenco family. His father and grandfather were both guitarists who went under the name "Tomate" (despite being in a desert, Almería is a horticultural center known for its tomatoes). Young José grew up playing the guitar and made his debut as a soloist at the local *peña*, or flamenco club, at the age of 10. The family soon moved to Málaga, a city with a stronger flamenco tradition, which is where Tomatito's career began to take off. It was here, when still a youngster, that he first met the legendary (and fellow Gypsy) singer Camarón de la Isla. In his early work, Camarón had been accompanied by Paco de Lucía,

yet after a fierce argument in a New York hotel room (the reasons for which are still unknown), the two artists went their separate ways. Tomatito quickly filled the gap left in de Lucía's wake, and Camarón and Tomatito went on to form one of the most powerful and artistically successful partnerships in the history of flamenco—one that lasted until the singer's death in 1991.

"Camarón gave me everything I have," Tomatito later said. "He made me."

The spectacular alchemy between the two men is still evident from their first recordings together, notably on the 1979 album *La Leyenda del Tiempo*, one of the truly groundbreaking records in the art form. The duo combine effortlessly and flawlessly as though made for each other, Tomatito's

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guitar producing a perfect platform and counterpoint for Camarón's extraordinary and unequalled voice. Look out for video footage of the two men performing live, where the connection between them becomes even more evident. For me, one of the most powerful visual images that exist in flamenco is the expression on Tomatito's face as he accompanies Camarón: Those eyes speak of admiration, absolute artistic union with his partner, and what can only be described as love.

Camarón's untimely death at the age of only 41 was a low point for the world of flamenco, even more painfully so for Tomatito. "I went through a bad time," he told an interviewer. "Everything was broken for me. I still haven't heard anyone sing like him."

Many feared that the experience might derail Tomatito's promising career; yet, amazingly, he came back, reinventing himself as a solo performer who went on to become one of the most important flamenco guitarists of the modern era.

"To play the guitar, you have to be in love with the instrument until you die," he insisted. In the two-and-a-half decades since Camarón's death, he has barely stopped, recording eight albums, writing music for film, collaborating with an impressive number of artists—including Frank Sinatra, Elton John, Neneh Cherry, John McLaughlin, and Chick Corea—and winning a seemingly endless number of awards, including two Latin Grammys.

Like many in contemporary flamenco, Tomatito has explored other musical forms to a certain extent, bringing influences from jazz and pop into the art form; yet he is perhaps the figure who has strayed the least in those directions, retaining a sound deeply rooted in his flamenco—and Gypsy—upbringing. The spectrum of tone in his playing is vast and versatile, ranging from muscular and rhythmic to whimsical, impish, and heart-wrenchingly delicate, like a reed bending in the breeze, never breaking.

If you are already familiar with his music, you know what I mean. If his name is new to you, I suggest you start with his first solo album, *Rosas del Amor*, and slowly work your way through. It will be a magical, unforgettable ride.

CG



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LETTER FROM DOWN UNDER

Left to Right: Minh Le Hoang, Bradley Kunda, Tim Kain, Matt Withers



GUITAR-FAMILY MATTERS

Guitar Trek, Australia's premier guitar quartet, reflect on classical guitar there

by Tim Kain, Matt Withers, Bradley Kunda, and Minh Le Hoang

G'day from down under! Guitar Trek is thrilled to be turning 30 next year and we're stoked to share with you our reflections on the guitar in Australia over the past three decades. For those who have never visited our island nation, you have heard of all the dangerous spiders, sharks, crocodiles, bluebottle jellyfish, and drop-bears that are out to kill you. You'll be pleased to know that the guitarists of the country are quite the opposite. Over the years, Australia has thrived with its collaborative and supportive community of guitarists, teachers, composers, and luthiers—too many to name them all—who have contributed to creating an exciting and ever-evolving musical scene.

Australia's first guitar quartet was the Sydney Guitar Quartet (now the Sydney Guitar Trio, comprising Richard Charlton and Raffaele and Janet Agostino), formed in the early '80s. Tim Kain—Guitar Trek's founder—was then just setting the gears in motion for what would become Australia's most famous guitar school at the Canberra School of Music (later the Australian National University School of Music). There were some real pioneers at work back then (as there are now), particularly on the guitar-making front: Greg Smallman had just put one of his groundbreaking, lattice-braced guitars into the hands of John Williams, and Tim was playing his part to promote the rich new sound of these guitars whenever he toured the country.

Other makers soon cottoned to the lattice idea, with other exciting experimentation soon following for the relatively young instrument. In fact, Australian luthier Graham Caldersmith took the guitar in a different direction again by suggesting to Tim that he should create a quartet using different-sized guitars: treble, standard, baritone, and bass. If other instruments had formed into families over time, why not the guitar? And so, in 1987, Guitar Trek was born.

The group's first concert sold out and the program repeated an hour later for those who couldn't get a seat the first time. A debut CD, *Music for a Guitar Family*, followed in 1990 on Australia's biggest record label, ABC Classics. By this time, the group had made yet another important leap forward: Expanding the quartet repertoire by commissioning new Australian composers, as well as crafting arrangements of their own. The group created guitar-family-friendly versions of popular works covering everything from Albéniz to Led Zeppelin. There was an obvious driving force behind this move: Repertoire for the "guitar family" didn't exist!

Arranging and commissioning new works that take advantage of the guitar family's expanded pitch, sonority, and color range seems to us to be a scenario that could and should be duplicated in other parts of the world. Composers have likened our approach to chamber ensembles they

are familiar with, such as string or wind quartets. In addition, with four independent voices to write for, much of the difficulty in understanding and writing for the solo instrument disappears.

The first composer to write for Guitar Trek was Nigel Westlake, who in 1989 wrote "Winter in the Forgotten Valley" for the full guitar family. Nigel has since become one of the leading voices in Australian music, with many concert works and film scores to his name. And he continues to write for the guitar—including a recent solo sonata (written for Tim) and an incredibly imaginative quartet piece titled "Six Fish"—a staple in Guitar Trek's repertoire, but actually written for Saffire, another great former Australian guitar quartet. The work is scored for two standard guitars, 12-string guitar, and Dobro, and the sound is lucid, colorful, and eerily evocative of the underwater world.

In the early 1990s, things were really cooking for the Australian guitar. Tim paired up with John Williams as part of a seven-piece mixed chamber ensemble called Attacca, which featured the clarinet virtuosity of the group's in-house composer, Nigel Westlake, as well as musicians from both Australia and the UK. John and Tim then released a CD of duets on Sony, and the biggest beneficiary was again probably the Australian guitar repertoire, with composer Phil Houghton receiving noteworthy attention for his unique compositional voice. Phil is another of Guitar Trek's loyal advocates, and in 1992 he penned for the guitar family a major quartet called "News from Nowhere," and later expanded his "Wave Radiance" for the group. Richard Charlton followed soon after with his very popular "Dances for the Rainbow Serpent" and other subsequent important additions to our repertoire. Many of Australia's leading composers have also written for us.

By the mid-1990s, Guitar Trek was gaining noteworthy attention around Australia and overseas. The group had toured the United States and Southeast Asia and was featured at major international festivals Down Under, including the Darwin International Guitar Festival and the Adelaide Festival. By this time, the line-up had also changed and featured the talents of Carolyn Kidd, Mark Norton, and Peter Constant alongside Tim. (Peter has since gone on

Arranging and commissioning new works that take advantage of the guitar-family's expanded pitch, sonority, and color range seems to us to be a scenario that could and should be duplicated in other parts of the world.

to form the outstanding ZOO Guitar Duo in Holland with his guitarist wife Marian Schaap, while as notable teachers in Canberra, Carolyn and Mark helped spawn a whole new generation of guitarists). The members of Guitar Trek have always come through Tim's careful pedagogical nurturing at the ANU School of Music—these have been outstanding graduates who gain enormous benefit from the group by cutting their professional teeth in an established and well-respected ensemble.

Australia has many talented teachers, one of whom has prepared a great number of young students for Tim's tertiary program—Andras Tuske, who is based in Adelaide and taught current Trekkers Bradley Kunda and Matt Withers during their formative years, as well as other names readers might recognize—Alex Tsiboulski and Andrey Lebedev.

Also based in Adelaide, Oliver Fartach-Naini is doing great work at the Elder Conservatorium and recently organized a national chamber music festival with guitar. Similarly, in Perth, Jonathan Paget, a highly accomplished player himself, has worked tirelessly for the guitar at WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts) over many years, supported by a hugely active guitar teaching program in Perth's schools.

Among the many fine guitarists around the country, Karin Schaupp is one of Australia's best-known players, currently in the prime of her career. Karin was taught by her mother, Isolde, who held a position at Queensland University for many years as one of Australia's main guitar teachers. Karin was a member of Saffire, and has also

contributed enormously to the guitar in Australia with a large number of recordings and extensive touring, both nationally and internationally. She has undertaken innovative collaborative projects in recent years, at times taking the guitar into some fascinating uncharted theatrical territory.

Slava and Leonard Grigoryan have made a massive contribution to the public awareness and popularity of the guitar in Australia through highly virtuosic playing and extensive recording and touring. As well as composing, arranging, and commissioning, they have expanded the classical instrument's possibilities in many crossover collaborations and have been enormously successful in connecting with a wide cross-section of the Australian community.

Tim's former students Dan McKay (a former Trekker as well) and Tonié Field, are doing great work in Melbourne by continuing the generational expansion of the guitar family with the Melbourne Guitar Quartet. Tonié's students Michael MacManus and Evan Hopkins have recently formed the Melbourne Guitar Foundation offering a brilliant concert series, festival, and competition.

Aleksandr Tsiboulski, based in Adelaide, is a superb musician in the style of the traditional virtuoso pianist or violinist. His two Naxos releases to date are a testament to a classical artist of great integrity and deep musical conviction. His solo and chamber music activities add greatly to the Australian music scene and the standing of the classical guitar as a serious concert instrument here.

Another of Tim's former students, New Zealander John Couch, runs the Taranaki

Guitar Summer School in New Zealand every second January, while maintaining his performing career and teaching in Canberra during the rest of the year. In fact, many of Tim's former students have continued a life in music performance while teaching in schools in Canberra and in other parts of the country, as well as overseas.

In Sydney, the Sydney Guitar Society has played a pivotal role in the public profile of the guitar for 30 years with its regular meetings, guitar orchestra and ensembles, and concert series, often featuring international artists. Key members of the society, notably Christopher Keane, Raff and Janet Agostino, and Richard Charlton, have run the Sydney Guitar Summer School for more than 20 years. This is a five-day event that brings together young guitarists from all around the country.

An important recent development in the Australian guitar scene has been the appointment of Vladimir Gorbach as the full-time guitar lecturer at the Sydney Conservatorium, following the retirement of Greg Pikler, who held the position for more than 30 years. This position has become all the more valuable for the continued good health of the classical guitar in Australia, since severe cutbacks suffered at the ANU School of Music at the end of 2012 effectively brought the school to a standstill as a nurturer of high-level performance. A guitar department with a considerable international reputation was also destroyed in the process.

As in many other countries, university music departments are under threat right now around Australia, causing many to worry about the future of classical music here. It's a space we are all watching nervously. Outside of the universities and conservatoriums, the performance arts in Australia have long been supported by the Australia Council, as well as Musica Viva's Schools Education program and their international concert series, which have all helped to build a solid foundation for enjoyment and education nationally. Much of Guitar Trek's funding for instruments, touring, and commissioning has come through the Australia Council and Musica Viva.

Guitar Trek currently comprises Matt Withers, Bradley Kunda, and Minh Le Hoang, with the ship still steered by Tim—albeit in a very collaborative way. Each member is extremely active in the Aussie scene, with Minh performing and teaching; Bradley composing, teaching, playing, and

studying conducting—he has a new disc on the horizon with soprano Rebecca MacCallion; and Matt performing, teaching, and creating the Matt Withers Australian Music Composition Competition, continuing the growth of solo guitar repertoire.

Moving toward the group's 30th anniversary, this lineup continues the tradition of promoting the classical guitar around Australia. Major highlights have included a concert at the iconic Sydney Opera House presented by the Sydney Guitar Society, and

a concert in the Adelaide International Guitar Festival, the most prestigious in the southern hemisphere. Guitar Trek recently released *Serene Nights*, our sixth album on ABC Classics, this time going one step further into the unknown by re-creating a careful selection of our favorite *non-guitar* works for quartet.

We send warm best wishes to guitar players everywhere and hope this snapshot of the Aussie guitar scene sparks still more interest in all things plucking Down Under. **CG**



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HIGH SOCIETY



Society Gathering in Baltimore.
Organizer Asgerdur Sigurdardottir is in the center.

GUITAR SOCIETY SUMMIT EDUCATES AND INSPIRES

by Blair Jackson

There's nothing easy about running a classical guitar society. Funding is always the main issue, of course. Will concerts keep a society afloat? What level of performer is needed to attract guitar fans who will pay for concerts? What other activities should the society be engaged in? Providing a network of guitar teachers? Philanthropic activities, such as promoting the guitar in underserved and economically disadvantaged communities? How does the rent on meeting or performing spaces get paid? Can a society attract people who will work for free or very little, if only sporadically? Will foundations help out? What are other potential funding sources?

So many things to consider, and working in isolation only makes matters more difficult. Every community is different, and every guitar society that serves that community is different. But there are also common problems shared by most of them, and a strong desire to help one another navigate both stormy and calm seas. That was the idea behind the Fifth Guitar Society Summit, held March 5 and 6 at the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. The event, which was organized by the Baltimore Classical

Guitar Society, spearheaded by president Asgerdur Sigurdardottir, attracted representatives from 15 other classical guitar societies spread around the US and two from Canada. "We're in a good location, about halfway between Miami and Ottawa," Sigurdardottir told me by phone a few days after the Summit. "We also had an inquiry from Mexico, and there were a few societies that couldn't come because they were putting on their own concerts that weekend. But there's a lot of interest in this; it's bigger every time." The first Summit, in 2008, took place in New York City and attracted six regional societies.

On the first day of the Summit, the society reps introduced themselves and discussed their respective operations, but the day was dominated by a lively talk and extensive Q&A with guest speaker Matthew Hinsley of Austin Classical Guitar, one of the largest and most successful guitar societies in the US. (Hinsley was interviewed in the Spring 2015 issue of *Classical Guitar*). "He gave a workshop about board development, budgets, staffing, all sorts of valuable things," Sigurdardottir says. "He talked to us about how he grew their society. It's all about grassroots. People ask, 'How do you book artists? What kind of contracts



SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

Austin Classical Guitar

Boston Classical Guitar Society

Greater Cincinnati Guitar Society

Cleveland Classical Guitar Society

Florida Guitar Foundation (Miami)

Lancaster Guitar Club

Marlow Guitar Series (Washington, DC)

Minnesota Guitar Society

New York Classical Guitar Society

Ottawa Guitar Society

Philadelphia Classical Guitar Society

Pittsburgh Classical Guitar Society

Tampa Bay Area Guitar Society

Guitar Society of Toronto

Wilmington Classical Guitar Society

Major Guitar Summit funding came from the Augustine Foundation and the Peabody Conservatory.

do you use?" Basic stuff, and also more complicated things. He had a list of do's and don'ts—we all took meticulous notes on that, and went away with long lists of things we need to implement, or at least discuss with our organizations.

"The more we can learn from each other" she adds, "the better we can serve the performers who are out there, because in the end, they are the ones who are going to benefit because we put on better concerts and are more successful in bringing audiences in."

After that all-day session, the action shifted to the Baltimore Museum of Art, where Summit participants enjoyed a wine and cheese reception, followed by an on-stage interview of internationally known composer Marc Neikrug, whose *Three Pieces for Guitar* had its world premiere that night at a concert at the museum by Polish guitarist Lukasz Kuropaczewski, a skilled Peabody Conservatory graduate who studied there with the great Manuel Barrueco. Kuropaczewski's program also included pieces by Mauro Giuliani, Kristof Penderecki, Alexandre Tansman, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Krzysztof Meyer.

On the second day of the Summit, the attendees heard a lecture by attorney Michael

D. Oliver, who spoke about dealing with international intellectual property law, social media laws, contracts, audio/video recordings, conflicts of interest, and other issues. "He gave a crash course on everything from the 'terms of service' we have to have on our websites to why certain clauses are in contracts," Sigurdardottir says. "If we record concerts, what are the legal ramifications of that?"

The formal part of the conference concluded with a post-lunch discussion of possible topic areas for the next Summit—to be held in 2017, again in Baltimore—and then Kuropaczewski taught an optional master class.

"It was inspiring, it was humbling," Sigurdardottir says of the Summit. "It benefits all of us. Of course there are things that are different in Baltimore than New York or in Canada, but basically we're dealing with the same issues. We want more people to come to the concerts, we want to talk about audience development. We want our organizations to run smoothly. Having a place we can share our experiences is fantastic."

Contact Asgerdur Sigurdardottir about next year's summit: president@bcgs.org



Lukasz Kuropaczewski

**JOHN
WILLIAMS
IS NOT CELEBRATING
HIS 75TH BIRTHDAY**

*BUT IS CHEERILY REFLECTING ON FIVE DECADES OF RECORDINGS ANYWAY

BY THÉRÈSE WASSILY SABA

The first biography of John Williams—*Strings Attached: The Life & Music of John Williams*, written by William Starling—came out in 2012. It's a remarkable book, not only for its insights into the Australia-born virtuoso, but also because the opening chapters present thoroughly researched background information on the guitarist's English father, Len Williams, who taught John from the beginning and also helped many other classical guitarists in the post-World War II era. When the family moved back to London in 1952, Len, who was fine guitarist himself, opened the Spanish Guitar Centre near Leicester Square, in the heart of London.

Andrés Segovia first heard young John play at the age of 11 and arranged to study with him during the summers at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Italy. It was there that Williams met the Venezuelan virtuoso Alirio Díaz and developed his intense love of Venezuelan music.

While Segovia's famous quote, printed in the program for Williams' first Wigmore Hall recital, on November 6, 1958—"God has laid a finger on his brow, and it will not be long before his name becomes a byword in England and abroad..."—has remained with him, and plagued him throughout his career, his father's response to that quote, which appears in the biography, gives

some idea of Williams' very grounded upbringing. Len Williams was with friends at a pub after the concert, when he said: "Touch his brow? You'd get far more response by kicking his f—ing arse!"

No wonder John Williams is one of the most unpretentious and open-minded musicians around.

Despite his oft-stated preference for avoiding anniversaries and celebrations, I met up with Williams in London in the run-up to his 75th birthday (April 24). Not coincidentally, Sony has released a 58-CD and DVD box set of his recordings with CBS and Sony Classical, meticulously produced by Robert Russ. It's an outstanding collection of recordings that show the breadth and depth of this unique musician, whose collaborations in the music world have always stretched beyond the boundaries of classical music and also far beyond national borders. As we discussed his five-decade recording career, I realized how he had been enmeshed in London life throughout that time, not just in terms of his musical collaborations, but also in the history and politics of the people who came there from all over the world—some even in exile.

CLASSICAL GUITAR: This is an amazing collection of 50 years worth of recordings, going back to your very first one in 1964

when you were 23 years old. It is not only a reflection of what is happening in the music world, but also what is happening in London life as well. Let's start with André Previn.

JOHN WILLIAMS: I first met André in 1967 in Houston, Texas, in the United States, where he was the conductor [of the local symphony]. I was playing the usual [Joaquín] Rodrigo concerto [*Concierto de Aranjuez*], and we struck a friendship from then. He was about to take up the London Symphony Orchestra post. Then, some time over the next couple of years, he wrote a concerto for me. We did the premiere of that in 1971—the concerto included a jazz trio.

CG: Yes, it's here in the box, CD15, and it says that the British prime minister, Edward Heath, guest-conducted the opening piece by Elgar. You so often work with jazz musicians.

JW: Yes, I don't improvise but I have done a lot with [reeds player] John Dankworth and [singer] Cleo Laine so I'm very good at playing the style, if it's written out for me, which they always used to do. I did two recordings with them. I did a whole week as their guest when they were playing at the London Palladium. It happened to be a blackout [power outage] week; it must have been 1978.

Segovia was in town also, staying at his usual hotel. I was going through a little bit of a delicate time with Segovia then, but I hadn't fallen out with him—he had heard that I was accompanying a jazz singer. He hadn't told me, but he had told other people that he didn't really like the idea of me playing with a jazz singer. So I visited him during the blackout because it was easy to hop across from the Palladium after a rehearsal. I thought: "I've got to explain it." I played him a bit of "Cavatina"—the instrumental version. He looked at me and said, "It's a pretty tune; it's nice." I was quite pleased that I got away with it. Then I explained that Cleo Laine had written words for it.

CG: On CD3 in the box set you are playing the *Concierto de Aranjuez* with the conductor Eugene Ormandy. Was that your first Rodrigo recording?

JW: Yes, that's the first one, but of course I had played it a few times before that recording. I must have played it much earlier, at a Sunday evening concert in Swiss Cottage with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, with Charles Groves. Then I played it up in Liverpool with him. Charles Groves was the music director of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for years.

CG: Were there lots of performances of *Aranjuez* at that time?

JW: I first heard it after I came to England as a boy of 11 with my mother and father in the early 1950s. We knew Julian Bream, having met him at a guitar society meeting. He would have been about 19 years old then—he's about seven or eight years older than me. He was playing the Rodrigo concerto at Tottenham Municipal Baths in north London—Julian and I were talking about this a few months ago. I always remember that, because in the slow movement the oboe or the flute didn't come in on a cue and Julian played it himself.

CG: Can you remember when you first got the score?

JW: I can't remember, to be honest, but I *can* remember that there were a couple of things that I never liked and still don't like, which I change: There are a couple of passages very up high in the first move-

ment, which I think are very unpleasant-sounding; I play them down the octave. And I have never liked the high strummed chords at the end of the cadenza. Musically it makes total sense, but I find that there's more strength in the lower register—I play it an octave lower—because you play all six strings and the body of sound is much stronger. I noticed that very early on and that's how I've always done it.

CG: Over the years, do you feel that you have made changes in your playing of it?

JW: In my case, the changes that people generally read into different versions just happen on different days. It's not that I've sat down at the music stand and thought: "I must rethink my interpretation and I must rephrase this, and I think this is more important on the recapitulation." I think all that is nonsense; you're just playing as you feel at the time. There is a basic interpretation or a basic idea of the piece that you carry with you, like a suitcase I suppose, and the contents are sometimes old and sometimes they're new, but it's the same suitcase.

CG: The range of recordings in the box set is so broad. Was it easy to get the record company to agree to your collaborations?

JW: For all the early years, I had a fantastic relationship with my producer, Paul Myers. We did things that were quite experimental—even for that time. Looking back, they weren't always 100 percent successful, but they have a little cult following now, which I am quite proud of, like the Patrick Gowers pieces—the *Chamber Concerto for Guitar*, first of all, and then *Rhapsody*, which was commissioned by the St. Alban's Cathedral Festival, where I gave the first performance. The organist [at St. Alban's], Peter Hurford, is a friend of mine, and he also loves the guitar. *Rhapsody* has two electric guitar tracks, one on each side of the stereo [field], and then it has a "live" classical guitar positioned in the center, like a concerto with a prepared tape. Later on, I played it for a whole week at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in [London's] Soho using the prepared tapes.

CG: And the Itzhak Perlman recording [*Duos by Paganini and Giuliani*, 1977]?

JW: I knew Itzhak through [pianist and

conductor] Daniel Barenboim; Daniel and I knew each other from when we were about 11 or 12 years old in Siena—we are almost the same age, just six months apart. Chris Nupen [from Allegro Films] and I had a flat in New Cavendish Street and Daniel used to visit there and rehearse at a studio around the corner. Itzhak suggested that we do a record together; it just came up in conversation. Itzhak, of all the violinists, is my favorite, so it was an honor to do that recording, but it's a shame that the repertoire is so thin.

It was one of the easiest recordings I have ever done, because of his sense of movement and rhythmic gravity; we just had exactly the same approach. Come the week before the recording, we still hadn't played a note together. So one evening he arrived at about midnight and we sat at my kitchen table until about 4 o'clock in the morning, reading through Giuliani, Paganini, odd bits and pieces to decide what to record in the following week. We had the studio for two days but we finished early. It was just so easy. If one of us felt that a repeat needed to be softer, we would just make a raised eyebrow and we'd both play softer and then come in together.

CG: This box set doesn't include a major aspect of your life, which was being part of the group called Sky [a very popular band that mixed rock, classical, and other forms].

JW: Nor the Cleo Laine and John Dankworth recordings. Sky was launched in 1979–80 and I was in it for about three or four years. *Sky I* and *Sky II* were by far our best albums. I left when we did the sixth recording. I learned an amazing amount working with others during that period, which, by the way, was not exclusive to everything else—I was doing just as many other things at the same time; there's never been a conflict for me.

CG: Not a conflict, but the volume of work must have been exhausting.

JW: It was a lot of work, but if you are learning and you are excited by it, then for a musician, it's not a lot of work. I can't emphasize enough how much the classical world has got to learn from, let's call it, the popular world in music. Even singers like Val Doonican—to watch Val working on his television show, his presentation, it's all part of it. Things are getting much better



now in the classical world, but there's still a lot they can learn.

CG: A lot of those television appearances are on YouTube now.

JW: Have you seen the *Les Dawson Show*? Les Dawson was wonderful, and I also did loads of Eric Sykes [comedy show] programs. I've always liked that. The first television show of that sort that I did was the *Billy Cotton Band Show* in about 1960. I met Eric Sykes just before that. Val Doonican's shows were mostly broadcast live from the BBC theater in Shepherd's Bush during the



ABOVE
John Williams
and Julian Bream
LEFT
The box set



1970s and 1980s. Every week at 8 o'clock on Saturday night, he would be talking live to 18 million people.

With Sky we all had fingers in lots of pies. The bass player, Herbie Flowers, is legendary, famous for the bass riff on Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side." Then, apart from my recordings with Sky, there were *Changes* and *The Height Below*, with Brian Gascoigne—they were for the Fly Cube label. *Changes* had the first "Cavatina," in 1970. *Changes* and *Travelling* were with Stanley Myers, and Herbie played bass on both of them; that was 1978–79.

Sky II, with the Bach "Toccata" as the single, was one of the best-selling records of the year. On one tour, we were at Glasgow Apollo with an audience of 2,000 people. Francis Monkman, our keyboard player, was playing the "Fandango" by Soler—which lasts for about 12 minutes—on the harpsichord—amplified obviously—and people just went *mad* afterwards; they really liked it. That sort of experience always stays with me—it is what music should be about.

CG: Was it strange to do regular classical concerts after that?

JW: No, except that gradually I tried to incorporate a lot of the response and feeling that I would get from that into my classical playing. Over the last few years, I have regularly played in large concert halls, which are not ideal for the guitar, but if you are going to do it, then you have to do it with

as good amplification as you can find. It's a way of bringing the guitar right up to a big audience, not just the faithful who know it.

In my case, it's a question of exploiting the luck that I have had, like with "Cavatina," which, because of the film *The Deer Hunter*, did get me known by a lot more people. But it also means that they get to know the guitar because of that. I think that is great, and I *will* exploit that, not for my own ego, but for the guitar. For example, if I'm on *The Val Doonican Show* and play the Bach "Gavotte" live for 18 million people—you have to play a lot of Wigmore Halls to reach that number of people!

CG: I cannot imagine anyone else ever having a similar career path as you with the guitar.

JW: You could look at it in two ways. One of the ways is certainly luck. When I came to England with my family, Julian Bream was blazing all these trails. As he got more well-known and started touring more, he passed on various work which he didn't have time to do. So I got all the benefit of Julian's work, certainly in England. Elsewhere was a bit different, because we went different ways, with our different musical tastes, but at the beginning, my stepping stones were ones that Julian had made. After that, my tastes changed and developed—I did a huge amount of contemporary music in the 1960s and basically decided it was a waste of time. It was an interesting experiment: Leo Brouwer, [Toru] Takemitsu, Peter Sculthorpe, Peter Maxwell Davies, all of them went on

beyond the 1960s so-called avant-garde and developed their own identities. I played Leo's first guitar concerto, which is one of his real 1960s aleatoric pieces; it's in the box set I'm sure.

Everything I have done has been a result of initially being in London and jumping at the opportunity, following up on suggestions and contacts. For example, playing at Ronnie Scott's Club. Ronnie Scott loved the guitar—he absolutely loved it. Do you know what his favorite piece was? "Scherzino Mexicana" by Ponce. He loved the way in the second part of it the fingers move like a crab in the descending, chromatic passage. I met him at the Africa Freedom Day Concert at the Royal Albert Hall in 1968.

CG: How did the recording with Greek singer Maria Farantouri come about?

JW: At the time of the dictatorship in Greece, which was from 1967 until 1974, a lot of Greeks, including musicians, writers, and poets, were exiled in Paris, Rome, and London. Maria used to stay in Kentish Town, when she wasn't in Paris. I was supporting occasional charity events for the Greeks and that's how I met them. Mikis Theodorakis had composed a set of songs based on poems by Garcia Lorca, and they asked if I would I play them. Again, like the Ronnie Scott situation—I was so pleased that I had been asked and I couldn't have wanted to do it more.

It was an identical situation with the group Inti-Illimani, because the Chileans had been based in Europe, exiled from the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. The political groups organizing the fundraising asked if I would play as a guest with them, and Paco Peña joined in as well. We ended up doing quite a few tours with them and two CDs [which are in the collection].

CG: There's so much more to talk about. It is a fantastic box set. Are there more recordings to come?

JW: Yes, but on my own label, called JCW Recordings. Also, there will be a few concerts, in the UK only, with John Etheridge and Gary Ryan—you'll be hearing about those very soon!

John Williams' website has hand-written manuscripts of some of his own compositions and transcriptions, which are free to download. He continues to add to these at: johnwilliamsguitarnotes.com

A man with dark hair, wearing large black headphones and a dark jacket, is shown from the chest up, playing a light-colored nylon string guitar. He is looking down at the instrument. The background is dark and out of focus, with some vertical lines suggesting a studio or stage setting. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man's face and the guitar.

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GUITAR MAVERICK

**John Schneider has dedicated his career
to the exploration of alternative tunings,
and the instruments they require**

BY GIACOMO FIORE

As with many other musicians, John Schneider's musical journey often found the figure of J.S. Bach as a point of departure. Schneider's early research, which focused on the mechanics of tone production on the guitar, was prompted by his attempts to use timbral shadings as a way to differentiate the four voices of Bach's *Fugue in G minor*, BWV 1000. "I was struck by the fact that there was no language that could exactly describe what I had done, and that inquiry led me to undertake a PhD in Music and Physics at University College Cardiff, in Wales." That research, titled "The Rational Method of Tone Production," eventually grew into a book covering the acoustical and physical foundation of the guitar's timbre and the guitarist's technique, as well as their use in the repertoire. *The Contemporary Guitar*, first published in 1985, was recently updated for a second edition: "After all," says Schneider, "a lot has happened in the past 30 years!" The new edition updates the repertoire section with more recent examples drawn from the tens of thousands of new pieces that have been composed for the classical, steel-string, and electric guitar in the intervening time. It also dedicates a chapter to the use of guitars in alternative and so-called microtonal tuning, a central focus of Schneider's professional career.

Unsurprisingly, it was Bach once again who led Schneider into the world of historical and experimental intonation, albeit in

a more oblique fashion: "I was giving a lecture and demonstration on 'The Rational Method of Tone Production' at the 1977 American String Teachers Association meeting in New Orleans. Right after my talk, a student of composer Lou Harrison's gave a presentation on the 'Meantone Guitar,' an instrument re-fretted to play Early Music in one of the historically appropriate tunings. I didn't know *what* the heck he was talking about, but the music sounded ... *different*."

Also at the conference was inventor Tom Stone, who had been perfecting a guitar that could easily switch between interchangeable, differently-fretted fingerboards through a magnetic fastening system. "The reason I was initially so intrigued with Tom's 'Switchboard' guitar was that I could finally play Bach in the unequal well-temperament of his era, rather than the bland equal temperament of ours," Schneider explains. Stone would end up introducing Schneider to Lou Harrison, whose music and theories would change Schneider's career path dramatically.

Harrison had started writing almost exclusively in alternative tunings in the early 1950s, after encountering the theories of American composer Harry Partch through his 1949 treatise *Genesis of a Music*. Nearly half a century later, Schneider dove into the world of these composers with reckless abandon, modifying and adapting instruments that allowed him

to perform their precisely-tuned music. "After struggling for months to transcribe Partch's 'Barstow' for one of the fingerboards of my Switchboard guitar, I realized that I had taken a wrong approach." Partch himself had been fashioning his own instruments to accommodate the complex system of just intonation he had devised as the foundation of his entire musical opus; only something like the original would do. Schneider ended up making a copy of Partch's original Adapted Guitar, a Martin acoustic guitar that the composer took on his extended periods of time on the road, living as a transient at the height of the Great Depression.

However, instrument-making turned out to be a bit of a rabbit-hole for Schneider. "Years later, I made a copy of Partch's second Adapted Guitar [a ten-string acoustic meant to be played with a slide, like a lap steel guitar], but that also needed a Diamond Marimba to play the repertoire...so I made a copy of that instrument, and at that point, there was no turning back. Here we are in 2016, and I'm working on my 18th and 19th instruments." Such dedication paid off: Schneider's PARTCH ensemble has been gathering critical praise since their formation in the early 1990s, even winning a Grammy for their recording of Partch's *Plectra and Percussion Dances* in 2015.

In 1998 Schneider commissioned American composer Ben Johnston—who had apprenticed with Partch before developing

A JUST INTONATION PRIMER

WHAT IS JUST INTONATION?

Just intonation is a tuning approach based on the intervals of the harmonic series: Pitches are derived by using whole-number relationship between their frequencies. For example, an octave is twice the frequency of the fundamental (or 2:1); a perfect fifth is calculated as 3:2 from the fundamental, or as the relationship between the second and third harmonic of the series. You can see for yourself by playing successive harmonics on the twelfth and seventh frets of the low E string on a guitar: You will hear E first, and then B, which are a perfect fifth apart.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS TUNING SYSTEM?

Generally speaking, just intonation tunings favor acoustical purity, as intervals "align" with the overtones of the fundamental; and intervallic variety, since successive harmonics are spaced progressively closer as one climbs the series. Once again, you can verify this on a guitar string by sounding harmonics at frets number 12, 7, 5, 4, 4.5, 3, and so forth: notice that the physical space between each consecutive node becomes closer and closer, as do the resulting pitches (E, B, E, G $\sharp$, B, and D). These factors combine to produce music that can be both beautifully consonant and bitterly dissonant.

WHAT ABOUT ITS DRAWBACKS?

Because just intervals vary in size, they are not as flexible in terms of modulation and transposition: if you tune your G $\sharp$ to sound as a pure major third to E, it may or may not work as a perfect fifth to C $\sharp$, and so forth. The historical solution was to temper harmonic intervals, modifying their intonation by a small amount, sacrificing tuning exactness for practicality. Our commonly used twelve-tone equal temperament does exactly that: It takes 12 consecutive fifths and makes each of them slightly flatter, so that the resulting interval is exactly seven octaves (as opposed to the "pure" chain of 12 fifths, which results in a pitch about one-eighth of a tone sharper than the origin).

WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?

Despite popular belief, equal temperament did not become widely used until the mid-19th century, which is why many contemporary practitioners of earlier musics employ historical tunings (such as the various kinds of meantone and other irregular temperaments) to perform the music of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and early Beethoven as these composers heard it. In the 20th century there was also a resurgence of interest in the expressive and compositional possibilities afforded by just intonation, as exemplified in the work of composers like Harry Partch, Lou Harrison, Ben Johnston, James Tenney, La Monte Young, Terry Riley, and many others.

his own intricate microtonal language—to write a piece for guitar and voice. He then found himself facing another daunting set of challenges. Schneider had acquired a guitar with individually moveable fretlets by German luthier Walter Vogt: Each fret is made of six individual parts, which can slide independently to yield a wide range of just and microtonal tunings (more fretlets can also be added to have more than 12 notes per octave); he therefore felt confident that he could accommodate almost any tuning Johnston could concoct. The composer wanted to use texts by the Sufi poet Rumi as the basis for his sound-cycle, and thus settled on a tuning scheme that would yield intervals approximating the quarter-tones of Persian classical music. The resulting scale sported 15 notes per octave, and the piece employed a much more intricate polyphonic texture than Partch's typically homophonic style. To make matters even more complicated, the song cycle was originally intended for self-accompanied performance.

"To make an 11-year-long story short, I couldn't work on the piece continuously because I often had to change the fretting on the Vogt for other recording and performing projects. Finally, I was invited to premiere 'The Tavern' at the 2009 Other Minds Festival in San Francisco, with about a year's notice. I accepted, thinking that the challenge would focus the situation. Six months out, however, I was only half-way through. I called up bass-baritone Paul Berkolds, who learned the vocal part, allowing me to focus on the accompaniment for the premiere." This approach ended up solving the problem: "I was trying to learn both parts simultaneously, which just wasn't working fast enough. After the premiere, it only took me two months to be able to sing the part, since my brain was already programmed to do the guitar part! Since then, I've performed it dozens of times, and finally recorded it for MicroFest Records on the album *Ruminations*."

That indie label is another of Schneider's recent developments, stemming from the festival of microtonal music of the same name, which has been presenting yearly seasons since 1997. Recent MicroFest projects include: A collection of pieces by Bill Alves for guitars plus Javanese and Balinese gamelans (a family of instruments from Southeast Asia made mainly of metallic percussion, tuned in a variety of non-Western scales) called *Guitars and Gamelan*; *The Wayward Trail*, an album of

Schneider plays the Vogt guitar during the *Guitar and Gamelan* sessions, with composer Bill Alves at the helm.



music for just intonation resophonic guitar (an instrument devised by Lou Harrison for his last completed piece, "Scenes from Nek Chand," in 2002) by Larry Polansky, David Doty, and Ezequiel Menalled, performed by Elliot Simpson; and Schneider's own recordings of suites for retuned guitars by Harrison and recent Pulitzer Prize- and Grammy-winner John Luther Adams. All in all, it's a lineup that showcases the rich and still-evolving tradition of music in alternative tunings based on the American West Coast.

Asked how he manages his multiple activities as a performer, producer, director, and scholar, Schneider acknowledges it can be tricky at times. "It's a bit like the art of Chinese plate-spinning, keeping each activity alive and humming along while not letting any of the other plates fall to the floor in a splintering crash! I basically divide my time into small, very concentrated chunks, being aware of what deadlines are approaching, while also planning future activities, prioritizing each day, and being willing to jettison it all in a moment to put out any fires, which happens constantly. But it's really no different than being a parent of multiple children—you need to know where each one is at any moment, what they're doing, what their needs are. Mind you, I only have two kids, and since they've moved out of the house, I get a lot more done!" **CG**

WHAT HE PLAYS

John Schneider owns many unique custom and "adapted" instruments tailored to his esoteric musical interests. In terms of his primary nylon-string guitar, "the one I've used in most of my recordings is a 1988 Walter Vogt." For Schneider's just intonation guitar, Vogt, who died in 1990, devised a "Fret-Mobile" system that allows for the adjustment of individual frets under each string via a track on which they slide.

FIVE NOT-SO-EASY PIECES

Five pieces for guitar that should be played more often, according to John Schneider:

ANDREW VIOLETTE: 'SONATA'

At over an hour long, it's among the largest solo guitar pieces ever written, and worth the time for player and listeners alike.

ALVARO COMPANY: 'LAS SEIS CUERDAS'

A midcentury masterpiece that is a kind of non-pedantic 'microcosmos' of guitar textures, techniques, and compositional styles that are riveting from beginning to end.

LARRY POLANSKY: 'FOR JIM, BEN, & LOU'

For harp, guitar, & percussion, in just intonation, and celebrating the influence of James Tenney, Ben Johnston and Lou Harrison. A piece that stretches the bounds of human playability and is simply amazing.

JAMES TENNEY: 'HARMONIUM #2'

For two guitars, a way for players of regularly fretted guitars to get in on the "micro" action.

JEFFREY HOLMES: 'NOCTURNES'

Elegant textures on three layers with deeply complex yet satisfying harmonies.

BENJAMIN **VERDERY**



**PLAYING
AND
COMPOSING**

**OUTSIDE
THE
BOX**

BY CHRISTOPHER MALLET

IT has been an eventful year for guitarist and composer Benjamin Verdery. He recently celebrated his 60th birthday, as well as his 30th anniversary at Yale University where, in addition to serving as professor and chair of the Guitar Department, he is also artistic director of the Yale Guitar Extravaganza, a biennial guitar festival. This year Verdery will also release his newest recording, *On Vineyard Sound*, which consists entirely of music written by composers who are on faculty at Yale. Over the years, Verdery has released nearly two dozen albums that display his comfort with a variety of genres and that fearlessly blur musical boundaries. He has also recorded with artists such as John Williams, William Coulter, Paco Peña, and Leo Kottke.

As a composer, Verdery has written works for solo guitar and a variety of ensembles, developing a distinct compositional style, which often shows the influence of Indian raga and American blues. His compositions have been performed and recorded by a number of guitar luminaries, including David Russell, John Williams, and the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. His background as a rock guitarist often shines through in his arrangements of songs by Jimi Hendrix, Prince, Elvis Presley, and others.

I first met Verdery in 2007, when I participated in a master class he taught at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, during my senior year as a classical guitar performance major. I later went on to receive my master's degree in 2009 at Yale, where I studied with him and worked as his assistant.

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with him at the end of what Richard Savino dubbed "GuitarStock," an epic hangout that brought Verdery out to the San Francisco Bay Area to meet up with fellow guitarists Sergio Assad, Andy Summers, David Tanenbaum, Marc Teicholz, and John Dearman.

CLASSICAL GUITAR: Let's begin with your new album of pieces by composers at Yale. How many years in the making was this project?

BENJAMIN VERDERY: The CD took a long time to complete and kept evolving over a few years. Without me knowing it, the journey began about ten-plus years ago, when my son was admitted to the Rhode Island School of Design's undergraduate department. They had this admissions requirement where the applicants had to do three specific different drawings on a specific type of paper and with a specific pencil at home, and send them in. One of the drawings had to be of anything to do with a bicycle. When I saw all the varieties of drawings of the bicycles at the beginning of the school year, it gave me the idea to assign a Yale audition piece in which a Yale composer was going to write a short piece and the applicants would all have to learn it. The piece would not include dynamics, articulations, or even a tempo marking. They would have one month to learn it. Hearing what the students do with the piece would tell me a lot about them creatively—and believe me it did and has! You, Chris, were admitted largely on how creatively you played the set piece, which was written by Jack Vees, and that was the first year of the audition pieces.

Anyway, after a few years, I realized that I had a collection of wonderful pieces. That's the real genesis of this recording. In a case like the Ezra Laderman piece, he wrote the first movement as the audition piece—which then, of course, wasn't the first movement, it was just the audition piece. I said to Ezra: "You're so great; this is so great! You have to write more." He did and went on to write the rest of the piece. The same thing happened with [composer] Hannah Lash.

CG: The Hannah Lash piece is for electric guitar, correct?

BV: It was written originally for classical guitar. It was the second movement of the Hannah Lash that was used for the [audition] set piece. I decided that I liked it better on electric.

There were some composers, like David Lang and Aaron Kernis, who did not write audition pieces. So I asked them if there was a piece in their catalog that I could arrange. David Lang gave me the idea to arrange a cello piece he had called "Little Eye." It's for cello and piano. The piano part, he said, could be on any other instrument, so I decided to do that with the pedal steel guitar and on Otto Vowinkel's baritone guitar. Aaron Kernis arranged a piano piece he had written in the '80s, called "Lullaby," for flute and guitar. Ingram Marshall had written an audition piece for solo guitar, but went on to write this beautiful alto- and C-flute-and-guitar piece for the CD. Jack Vees' piece was recorded using seven different guitars and is based on a CD titled *High Violet* from the indie band The National. It's quite textural, to say the least. Martin Bresnick and Chris Theofanidis also had audition pieces that are on the CD.

What I like about this album, and what I find interesting is, yes, all of them are or have been teachers at Yale, but their compositional styles are so varied. You would have no idea they are even all American. I think if you are into classical guitar, and guitar in general, there will be some work on this record you will connect with.

CG: Tell me about the release.

BV: It will be released in May, a bit unconventionally in that it will be a digital release. The release will include a short

video interview with each of the composers talking about their individual work. In addition, there will be two videos of me, playing through a movement of the Bresnick and a movement of the Laderman. It will be a debut recording for a new label, Elm City Records.

CG: In addition to pieces you commissioned and arranged for this album, you also included your own composition, “En Ti Los Rios Cantan.” What inspired you to write that piece?

BV: I was asked by a wonderful Chilean composer, Javier Farias, to play and record a duo of his with my dear friend Elliot Fisk in a concert that was celebrating the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. A very generous soul gave me a recording of Neruda reading his “Twenty Love Poems.” I was so taken with the passion and musicality of his voice in the poem “Ah vastedad de pinos,” I thought it would be wonderful to somehow interweave musical phrases with Neruda. I chose a couple of lines from the poem, and I listened to the intervals in his reading, which are mostly minor seconds, and I developed a piece around two or three of these lines. I used Digital Performer software to manipulate the words, creating different rhythms and textures. It’s a solo guitar piece that has four moments where the voice enters and then it disappears. It was the first time I have ever done anything like this.

CG: So this is your first piece for guitar and tape?

BV: Yes, first guitar and tape, first guitar and spoken word. It has led me to be more open, and right now I’m writing a piece with a young beatbox artist named Mark Martin, called “From Aristotle.” It’s a collaboration unlike anything I have done. We’re combining spoken-word, beatbox rhythms, imitating sounds of nature, and some singing, with the classical guitar. The text is taken from Aristotle’s *Poetics*. I don’t think I would have done that, or been as open to it, if I hadn’t written the Neruda piece.

‘I try to instill a sense of curiosity in my students. Before you play a note of any new piece, study it first, be curious about the composer, the expression markings, the tempo, the character of the work. Go deeper into it.’

CG: You’ve always been known to think outside the box as a classical guitarist, from your arrangements of Prince and Jimi Hendrix, to collaborations with Celtic guitarist William Coulter and Andy Summers from the Police. Your newest project with rapper Billy Dean seems to take classical guitar to completely new territory. What inspired you to fuse together hip-hop and the music of J.S. Bach?

BV: One of the things I encourage my students to do is just open their heart, do what excites them, and not judge it. Whether it’s Charlie Parker, or the playing of Marcin Dylla—who I think is incredible—whatever it is, if it moves you, then find out why. Go with it, and don’t be afraid; then you will refine it. In the case of this collaboration, I have known Billy Dean since she was eight years old. She’s my daughter’s best friend. I was sitting with my daughter one evening and she said, “Have you heard Billy’s new stuff?” Listening to it, I was struck by the sound of her voice, her beats, and textures. I thought, “What if we did something together? How wonderful!” That was it. It was purely just because I thought we should.

I called her up and said “Hey Billy, we should do something.” Ten minutes later, I thought of the “Allegro” [from Bach’s BWV 998]. So I sent her a recording and said, “See if you can rhyme to this.” She called me up and asked, “When are we going to rehearse? I’ve got the lyrics.” She came over, and I swear to you, after a few bars, I said “This is so cool!” I didn’t even let her finish. I couldn’t play it, I was so into it. I said, “OK, let’s book a studio immediately.” We both felt it was really flowing and didn’t question it. It was totally organic. It had nothing to do with me stretching boundaries, but it is, and has been, in my being, I guess, to do things like this. We also recorded my etude “Start Now.”

The basic reaction was positive, and some people’s YouTube comments on “Black Bach,” and the collaboration in general, are very heartfelt and beautiful. But there were also definitely some negative reactions to “Black Bach.”

CG: Did the criticism you might receive concern you?

BV: No, I didn’t think about it until after. Look, I’m not a total idiot. I knew that it was going to raise eyebrows. But I thought what she wrote was too beautiful and needed to be heard. In addition, I thought high school guitar teachers might play it for their students who have no idea what the classical guitar is, or Bach, but do know what hip-hop is, and by showing them the video, some bridges might be built. In a time of such racial divides, we thought it might help bring some students together, create a dialog about music, cultures. If nothing else, they might flip seeing an old, gray-haired white guy playing with a young, African-American hip-hop artist!

That having been said, I can give you a list of friends of mine who really don’t like it. Why should they? I can also tell you it reminded me racism is an ugly, horrible reality in this country. I got a hate message on YouTube that was so heinous, it would make the hair stand on your head. It was unmentionably hateful.

If you create art, you can’t expect everyone to like it. This isn’t a popularity contest. You don’t create art because you

Ben and Billy Dean



WHAT HE PLAYS

Ben Verdery's main guitar these days, as pictured in this photo of him with Billy Dean, is by New Jersey luthier Garrett Lee. Among his others are ones by Greg Smallman, Chris Carrington, and a steel-string model "which I use on the EP with Billy, *Hooks and Books*, by Jeff Traugott. All strings are D'Addario and I use a Barnett Guitar Support."

think people are going to like it; you do it because it enriches you, it inspires you, because you have no choice. Of course, it's human nature to want people to like what we do, so I'm not suggesting that when I get a negative review, I don't feel something. Of course I do, especially after all the blood, sweat, and cash that goes into a recording or a complex video shoot. I'd rather have people like what I do! As a classical guitarist, a teacher, and artistic director of a prominent guitar series, I try to set an example by being a truthful artist, struggling to be a better musician and guitarist each step of the way. I'm not doing this or that to win anybody over, I do it because I have to. By the way, when this article comes out, my EP with Billy, *Hooks and Books*, produced by Dave Veslocki, will have been released with four accompanying videos.

CG: For eight years now, you have been the artistic director of the 92nd Street Y Guitar Series in Manhattan, and recently you started releasing a set of videos called *92nd Street Guitar Talks*. How did that project come about?

BV: I noticed that the piano recitals had a pre-concert talk, so I thought, "Why doesn't the Guitar Series have a pre-concert talk?" So I began doing pre-concert talks about

the given program. As those developed, we built an audience for it, and I then thought, "What if I can interview the artists?" My first feeling was that nobody wants to talk before their concert—I certainly wouldn't! I was wrong. A lot of people were willing to be interviewed. I think Paul O'Dette was the first one. That led me to just keep asking everybody. They videotaped all the talks and made this series, and with the support of D'Addario, released them. I am overjoyed! Every one, from Sergio Assad, to the group interviews including people such as David Tanenbaum, the LAGQ, David Russell, and Raphaella Smits, to name a few, had such interesting things to share. I do think there is a dynamic there, of it being live, that gives it a certain energy. I hope it will provide a timeless snapshot of these extraordinary guitarists and their views about their lives and art.

CG: What advice do you have for aspiring guitarists and composers?

BV: Well, there's a sort of cliché you've heard a million times, which is to follow your heart. There is a good reason for that. You have to follow your path, which may not always be evident. We don't want to hear you write or play something that you feel you "should" write or play; we want to hear the piece you are burning to write

or play, and have given enough study and commitment to make it worth our while to listen to.

You need to go to the store and buy this thing called patience! It's cheap, but it takes some time to figure out how it works. Upon graduating from music school, it will take you seven to ten years to get a career going.

You need to be more still and quiet. You need to turn off the computer and your cell phone. There's way too much distraction.

I'll say one other thing. One of the most freeing expressions I learned as a teacher was, "I don't know." Meaning, "I can tell you a little bit about this phrase, my experience with phrases like it, or the history of the piece, but I'm not always exactly sure." We can't all be experts on everything, but we can be curious, we can try to know more. I try to instill a sense of curiosity in my students. Before you play a note of any new piece, study it first, be curious about the composer, the expression markings, the tempo, the character of the work. Go deeper into it. We all need to maintain a beginner's mind, as they say, and not be stifled by our lack of knowledge. Everybody is learning, everybody needs to grow or is growing.

Christopher Mallett is a co-owner and teacher at the California Conservatory of Guitar, and performs both solo and as part of DuoSF with Robert Miller.



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LUTHIERS PAST & PRESENT



42 Momentito

The art of the guitar maker
by Graham Wade

44 Reverberations

Collector Sheldon Urlik's superb
book on Spanish guitars
by Blair Jackson

48 Gernot Wagner

On double-tops and his influences
by Thérèse Wassily Saba

52 Spanish Immersion

An American luthier in Granada
by Stephan Connor



THE ART OF THE GUITAR MAKER

Some historical perspective
by Graham Wade

José Romanillos, one of the greatest luthiers of our era and an eminent scholar of the history of guitar making, commented in his massive study *The Vihuela de Mano and The Spanish Guitar* (Sanguino Press, 2002), "We felt that the contribution made by Spanish vihuela and guitar makers to the development of instrumental music had not been so far adequately represented." I remember a discussion with him some years ago when José put forward the case that performers and composers had always hogged the limelight, while the makers of instruments by and large were anonymous in the annals of history.

There were a few exceptions of course. The glorious names of Stradivari, the legendary maker of violins (who also made at least one guitar), and Guarneri are profoundly revered in the history of music. In the guitar world, we remember such masters as René Lacôte and Joseph Panormo in the early 19th century. Antonio de Jurado Torres (1817–1892) is acknowledged as having revolutionized the guitar into a more resonant and dynamic instrument than it ever had been. In the 20th century,

the Ramírez dynasty, and the likes of Ignacio Fleta, Hermann Hauser, David Rubio, Romanillos, Greg Smallman, and others, are examples of a rising tide of progress.

But José Romanillos was essentially correct in his judgment. Who, for example, made the vihuelas played by Luis Milán, Luis de Narváez, Alonso Mudarra, and the other masters of Spanish music at the time? Who made the lutes for John Dowland and the guitars played by Gaspar Sanz, Francesco Corbetta, and Robert de Visée? For centuries we celebrated the glories of composer/performers, but seem to ignore the individuals who made music possible by the creation of beautiful instruments.

Makers of instruments are hardly mentioned in consideration of 16th- and 17th-century artists, perhaps because they were regarded as artisans of a lower social class, while foremost musicians were often close to monarchs. Some virtuosos, such as de Visée, played to the king in his bed-chamber, while Narváez journeyed with the entourage of the mighty Emperor Charles V.

We know, of course, that even if guitar makers were relegated to below stairs, mu-

sicians of the first order were not always treated with respect, either. Mozart was quite shamefully abused by some of the aristocrats of his day, while J.S. Bach was a humble servant of his employers whether in court, church, or town council. The royalty payment system did not operate in those days, and composers of genius such as Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Chopin were wretchedly impoverished at times.

I remember a time when the classical guitar was, in purchasing terms, a true Cinderella among instruments. Bassoons and clarinets, for example, at the top end of the range, were far more expensive than even the best concert guitars, while classic violins, violas, and cellos were always way beyond what most musicians could afford at an auction. Over time, this situation changed for the guitar, though not always for the best.

In the 1960s, classical-guitar makers were often hard-pressed to make a living unless they had a good fund of capital to begin with. Buying wood overseas, Swiss spruce and Brazilian rosewood, was expensive in itself, let alone other neces-



increasing their prices accordingly. Nowadays, a Smallman guitar, if you progress through the waiting list, will cost at least what amounts to the average yearly salary in the UK. Not long ago, there was a 15-year waiting list for Romanillos guitars. Dealers in superb instruments regularly offer guitars from the 1930s onward at classic-guitar prices of \$20,000 upwards, a price available only on application, of course.

In the space of 30 years, we have had something of a revolution in how luthiers are regarded. We now know that you cannot have fine players without the finest instruments, and our respect for the luthiers' art is

founded on admiration of the miracles they create. As the respect has grown, so have the prices for their products; you really cannot have fine players without fine instruments. Good guitar-makers give us instruments that help us to grow as musicians.

Buying a guitar to play in concerts is now a difficult choice and a considerable investment. Each guitar has something of the soul of the maker within it. Taking hold of such a treasure and performing on it is a great responsibility.

Player and maker have a symbiotic relationship of a most precious kind. I think we all appreciate that now!

CG

"The London Guitar Studio is an oasis in London for all guitarists and for me personally, it's always a pleasure to visit Juan's shop."

—David Russell



sary items, such as machine tools, space for a workshop, varnish, machine heads, strings, etc. One of my close friends in the guitar-making profession was once paid £250 by a Spanish Guitar Centre store in England for an instrument that had taken a month to make. It hung on the wall for half an hour at the Guitar Centre before being sold for £500. (My friend sold no more guitars that way but undertook his own marketing, a hard lesson learned.)

But things changed and then prices began to go through the roof. One reason for this was the purchase of guitars by dealers in one country (for example, England) which were then sold in another country (such as Japan) for three or four times the purchase price. It was entrepreneurial initiative, all right, but often at the cost of inflating the market beyond the resources of mere players. In other words, wealthy people began collecting high-class guitars, which were then removed from the sphere of performers and virtually consigned to museums.

After that particular trend, with guitar inflation well established, makers began

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THE COLLECTOR

Sheldon Urlik turned his obsession with Spanish guitars into a beautiful and important book/CD project

by Blair Jackson

If you've never heard of Sheldon Urlik, or the impressive private collection of classical and flamenco guitars housed in his Utah home, don't worry—Urlik keeps a low-profile and his collection is not open for public viewing. However, if you're interested in seeing what these guitars look like and hearing how they sound, and are fascinated by the most minute imaginable details of these instruments, you're in luck. Urlik recently published the truly spectacular revised second edition of his long-sold-out 1997 book *A Collection of Fine Spanish Guitars from Torres to the Present*, adding a number of guitars he acquired in the interim and also an audio component: Three CDs, featuring 76 of the 82 guitars in the book with two discs devoted to classical guitars, and the third to flamenco instruments, all presented, like the book, in mostly chronological order. So, not only is the book an invaluable resource about Spanish-style guitars; it also showcases much of the traditional repertoire, heavy on interpretations of Bach, Fernando Sor, and Francisco Tárrega (among many others) on the classical side.

The only biographical information you'll find about Urlik in the book itself is one sentence on the jacket flap that describes him simply as "an amateur classical guitarist who has expressed his passion for the instrument by assembling and cataloguing one of the world's most important collections of Spanish guitars." When I reach him by phone at his home, he speaks about himself only reluctantly; he'd much rather talk about his guitars and his book.



1931 Luiz Carzoglio

We'll keep the biography brief. Urik grew up in Los Angeles and attended UCLA, graduating with an engineering degree. "Rather than engineering, though, I went into the Air Force and became a fighter pilot, and after five years in the Air Force, I went into the electrical signage supply business, and that's what I did until I retired in 2003." Evidently his business was very successful.

Urik didn't start playing the guitar until he was 40. "Kind of a late start, I guess, but I really enjoyed it and kept at it. Still, I've never been anything more than a serious amateur." The first high-quality guitar he acquired was a José Ramirez 1A that his wife bought him after he'd been taking lessons for a couple of years.

"One day I was in San Francisco and went into a shop called Guitar Solo, and I noticed they had two guitars on the wall that said 'Not For Sale,' and that really interested me. It was a [Hermann] Hauser I and a [Ignacio] Fleta, and the salesperson explained that they were valuable and on display just to attract customers. He said, 'I do have another guitar in the back that is for sale,' and he brought out a 1932 Hauser I. Fortunately, it was in good condition, because I was too inexperienced to buy a guitar needing repairs. So I bought it, and that was my first real collectible guitar.

"One pivotal evening in 1991, the young broker Tim Miklaucic [who went on to found Guitar Salon International] called at my home to show me three superb instruments, thinking maybe I would buy one. By the end of that night I was the owner of a 1922 Enrique Garcia, a 1969 Daniel Friederich, and a 1980 Jose Romanillos. I had a collection. Tim and a few other dealers—Dan Zeff, R.E. Bruné, and Bruce Banister come to mind—in time, earned my confidence by their square dealing and surprising access to many important guitars. Their acumen was a factor in the collection's growth.

"As I was starting to think about collecting, I bought a book called *The Guitar: From the Renaissance to Rock* [by Tom and Mary Anne Evans], that talked a lot about historic classical guitars and also had a time-spectrum breakdown for classical guitars. One of the spectra was 'From Torres to the

Present.' Of course, there are centuries of guitars before [Antonio de] Torres, but that would have been a whole different genre of instruments. From Torres to the present seemed feasible [to collect]. It's not a thousand guitars; more like a hundred.

"So I used that book as my guide: If the book had a [Francisco] Simplicio in it, I knew I should get a Simplicio. I knew I should get a Santos Hernandez. For better or worse, when I get interested in something, I really get involved," he says, adding, "The '90s were a very good time for somebody building up a collection. There was something of a worldwide recession going on and a lot of guitars came out of the closets in foreign countries to be turned into dollars, and fortunately I was in a position where I could complete the sales. As time went by, too, I learned more and more and I became even more discriminating."

Through the years, he managed to acquire guitars by most of the essential luthiers since Torres, including generations of the Ramirez and Hauser families, Enrique Sanfeliu, Domingo Esteso, Robert Bouchet, Marcelo Barbero, Hernandez y Aguado, and many others, up to modern masters of the style such as Greg Smallman and the late Thomas Humphrey.

Asked about what he considers the jewel of the collection, Urik doesn't hesitate: "The 1888 rosewood-bodied Torres owned by Tárrega. To me, that is the most collectible, precious guitar there is. It has the perfect provenance and was constructed by the most revered guitar maker. Plus, it is a magnificent-sounding instrument, and in very good condition. It's analogous to Niccolò Paganini's Stradivari—though not nearly as valuable—in the violin world.

"That great guitar can really transport you," he continues. "I've had guitarists come here and when they played that guitar, some of them got lightheaded! One virtuoso player was here and he started playing pieces by Tárrega on it and he kept commenting, 'At last, I know how to play Tárrega!' It's really something special."

Urik says he had an overriding purpose in putting together the second edition of *A Collection of Fine Spanish Guitars from Torres to the Present*: to thoroughly document this unsurpassed collection of "modern"



1888
Antonio de Torres



Cover of the book

Spanish-style guitars. Not surprisingly, he devotes more space to the 1888 Torres than any other guitar in the book—outlining its entire history and noting every restoration measure used on it—but all the guitars are covered in extreme technical depth, with the dimensions of every part of the instrument, charts of wood thickness on many different parts of the instrument, bracing diagrams, and detailed color photos showing the full guitar front and back, the rosette, and the interior label. Urlik's text is mostly given over to descriptions of wood types,

bracing, and rosettes, along with anecdotes, insights, and light biographical information about the makers; it is more catalog than history book, though there's plenty of history, too.

The idea to include music played on the guitars for the second edition came from the outstanding Cuban guitarist Rene Izquierdo: "He came to see the collection," Urlik says, "and like everyone who loves the guitar, he was overwhelmed. He said, 'If you write another book, I'll record all these guitars, no charge.' And that got me thinking

that documentation must include the voices of the collection. In the end, it turned out Rene couldn't do the project because he had so many conflicts in his schedule. He wouldn't have been able to do it for a year and a half. So I contacted my former teacher, Kenton Youngstrom, a consummate guitarist who can play it all. He realized that he'd be leaving a legacy if the book was well received, and I gave him the right to use the recorded files for his own commercial purposes. The task was not easy, either. He had to play 55 pieces in two days, calibrating his hand to new guitars for every track. But he did a great job, obviously." The noted flamenco player, scholar, and luthier Richard Bruné played the 21 flamenco pieces. Both guitarists, mindful of the book's budget and out of friendship with Urlik, recorded gratis.

Urlik has slowed his acquisition of guitars by this point, believing he has most of what he needs. Also there is this reality: "Guitars have become much, much more expensive. It's mentally hard for me to buy guitars today, because my memory still is locked in an old price schedule. Prices are probably three to ten times what they were in the '90s."

I closed by asking Urlik how new guitars sound to him compared to the older classics. "My book discusses quality of sound and longevity a lot. They can be very equivalent in quality, if they're really fine, quality instruments. But I could turn the question around and ask: 'Isn't it surprising that the old masters made guitars that can still sound as beautiful as the new masters', with all their better tools and broader selection of materials now?' You can play surprisingly many of the old masters' guitars—the old Santos, the old Torres, etc.—and you can successfully compare that sound with the best of more modern guitars, whatever their age or material, or their builders' approach." **CG**



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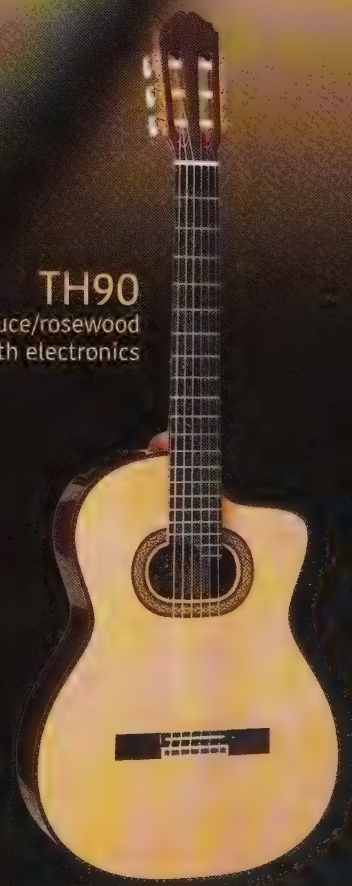
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GERNOT WAGNER

The master luthier on the double-top movement and his influences

by Thérèse Wassily Saba

Over the past 100 years, the demands of a concert classical guitarist's musical life—performing in large theaters, playing chamber music with other instruments that produce a substantially greater volume, performing concertos with orchestras, and recording—have forced guitarists to demand much more from their instruments. Thus, the challenge has presented itself to guitar makers throughout the world to build guitars with greater volume, more sustain, and increased sound projection.

This has resulted in many innovations in the construction of classical guitars, particularly in the top of the guitar, with guitar makers building for and sometimes in collaboration with leading concert guitarists, such as Andrés Segovia with German guitar maker Hermann Hauser I and the Spanish guitar makers José Ramírez and Ignacio Fleta, John Williams with the Australian guitar maker Greg Smallman (who created the lattice-braced system), the Assad Brothers and Sharon Isbin with American guitar maker Thomas Humphrey (with his elevated fingerboard Millennium design), and David Russell and Manuel Barrueco with the German guitar maker Matthias Dammann (with the construction of “double-top” guitars). Along with those collaborations, the introduction of Nomex (a light carbon fiber honeycomb material) into guitar construction by the German guitar maker Gernot Wagner, based in Frankfurt, has been a game-changer.

Wagner's guitars are played by concert performers such as Jason Vieaux, Duo Melis, Bill Kanengiser, and others. He talked to me recently about the secrets behind the strong but beautiful sound that his guitars produce.



Gernot Wagner

CLASSICAL GUITAR: When talking about “double-top guitars” two luthiers come into my mind, you and your German colleague Matthias Dammann. Would you say that there are big differences in your approaches, or are they similar?

GERNOT WAGNER: I met Matthias more than 20 years ago and we soon felt a kind of spiritual kinship with each other. At least [we share] a very similar integral way of viewing things concerning how the guitar works. We often exchanged ideas on acoustic issues and on practical questions which arose at work.

He has been building guitars with two wooden skins and with thin wooden strips in between as a spacer for many years. In my own guitar making, I was very struck by the sound of the guitars I made with tops using wood with a lower specific gravity. So I continued to build solid wooden tops using such wood for my guitars. With cedar, it is much easier to find extra-light wood, so I mainly built cedar guitars.

At that time, the way Matthias chose to make his tops seemed way too risky and too fiddly with all those thin wooden strips. So when I discovered the Nomex honeycomb, it was like a brainwave! When I discussed the use of this new material with Matthias, it was obvious for him to immediately borrow this idea [and] he built the first guitar using this material. The use of a synthetic glue and vacuum gluing was stringently required. A little later, I made my first double-top guitar using this fantastic material. Since then, numerous luthiers around the world have been copying the Nomex method in making guitar tops.

It would be better to call these tops “composite tops” because we are marrying two different materials with the aim of getting properties that are superior to the respective single materials we use.

Using Nomex as a spacer between two wooden skins, I get a high stiffness, which is required to withstand the string tension, combined with a low density—two factors that enhance the amount of sound radiated from the instrument. Furthermore, I will get a better propagation of sound, which is important for coupling all strings to those modes which induce net volume change.

CG: Why is the low weight so important?

GW: First, the tension and mass of the guitar’s nylon strings are both rather low. The force created by plucking a string is



1998 Double-Top

not very strong and it has only short-time momentum. There is no continuous input as you have with bowed stringed instruments. Also, the mechanical impedance of the guitar top/bridge is different from that of the strings. The bigger this difference is, the more of the applied force is reflected at the interface [top]. On an electric guitar [high impedance] this difference is much bigger than on a banjo, for example. With the electric guitar, you will have an “endless” sustain [amplified]; with the banjo [low impedance] you will get a great volume but very short notes.

The consequence is that it is important to strive for a better impedance matching of the two coupled oscillators [strings and guitar body]. Impedance matching gives a more effective transfer of energy. Thus, by having a lighter top, you will get more volume. With these tops, which are more flexible but not at the expense of resilience, you get a better modulation of volume. You have a wider dynamic range. It is easier to induce vibrations even with very low force. So you get a better *pianissimo* and you can also play loudly when you need to. With these tops it is much easier to get lower fundamental modes. My Helmholtz resonance [body resonance] is mostly around F or F

sharp. This way I get a really sonorous bass with a great number of harmonics, and thus my guitars have a rather dark timbre.

CG: Has there been a particular luthier who has been a model for you?

GW: From the luthiers who are still alive, Daniel Friederich is the first in line. His aesthetic standards and his level of craftsmanship are unmatched. As far as I know, he was the first luthier who had a scientific approach to guitar making. It’s such a pity that he retired last year from his work. Other colleagues whose work I admire are Dominique Field from France, and Jeffrey Elliott/Cynthia Burton and Robert Ruck from the US. Perhaps some of the Australian makers—like Greg Smallman, Simon Marty and Jim Redgate—are important to mention, especially because of their innovative inspirations and really revolutionary methods. But they are more colleagues who have a very similar approach, and work at about the same level. And last, but certainly not least, is Matthias Dammann. Of course I also admire the creations of Antonio Torres of the Barcelona school, Enrique García and Francisco Simplicio, the French maker Robert Bouchet, and the German luthier Hermann Hauser I.

A lot of people, when they talk to me of guitars, they mean a very refined sound. This is more like a Hauser I or a Fleta, which has a good high E string. In the meantime, I think tastes have changed. You can see that John Williams has been playing on Greg Smallman guitars. In his earlier days, he played on a Fleta for many years. I think you can’t separate this development from a change in the taste of the players. If I had built this guitar 30 years ago, I think it would have been out of place, because our imagination of sound was very different.

CG: You have also designed some fantastic machines for your guitar-making workshop. Do many makers ask you about these?

GW: Several years ago, I was in Madrid to train some employees of Ramírez in making these double-tops and I built vacuum devices for them.

My instruments are plain, without frills, and they have no adornments without function. Apart from meticulous craftsmanship, sound and ease of playability are the things I continue to strive for—almost always improving, hopefully. So it’s a never-ending challenge!



JOEY LUSTERMAN PHOTO

GERNOT WAGNER, JASON VIEAUX, AND KOBLENZ

Many of the delights of a large festival like Koblenz are incidental and unexpected. The presence of Jason Vieaux was one of them. He had just taken possession of a new guitar by the German luthier Gernot Wagner. It uses the technology that Matthias Dammann uses in his guitars, which are played by noted soloists like Manuel Barrueco, David Russell and Scott Tennant. Jason Vieaux's Wagner has a spruce sandwich, whereas most of the Dammanns I have seen have been cedar. I was prepared for the larger volume of sound, but I had not expected quite so high a level of sheer beauty in the sound. Jason played Albéniz and Ponce in an impromptu foyer recital for my benefit, and the sound

filled the large and carpeted space of the Mercure Hotel. In the hands of this remarkable young American, it came close to the perfection of sound I have had in mind ever since being seduced by the guitar when I was in my teens—and that, in the current climate of volume, efficient use of energy, and general innovation, is as high a compliment as I can pay. I know very well that no guitarist worthy of the name would ever choose a guitar just because I liked it, but I thought I would put that on the record.

If I had had enough euros in my pocket, I would have bought one there and then. But Herr Wagner had already left, and besides, such ravishing beauties are not for the likes of guitar hacks.

—Colin Cooper
Classical Guitar
August 2006

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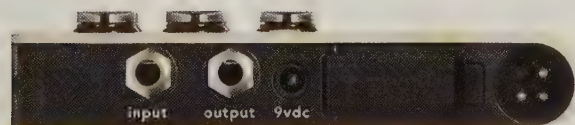
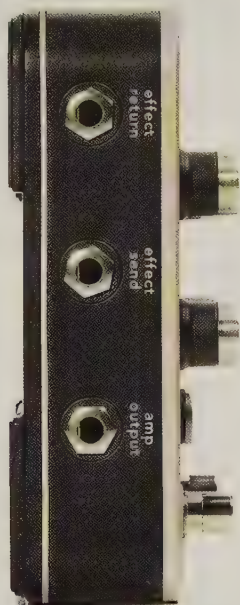
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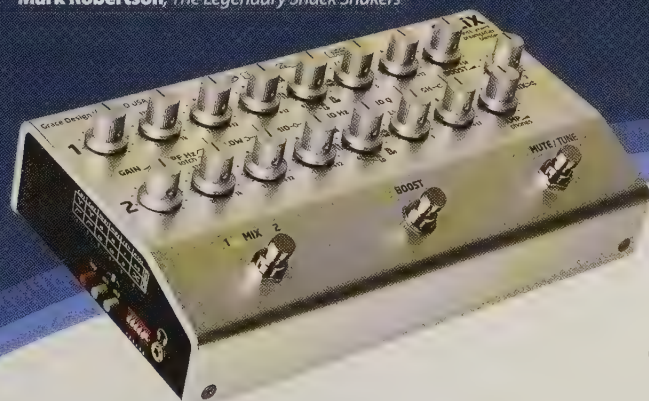
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— **Willy Porter**, Singer-songwriter, Performer, Virtuoso Guitarist



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For Dutch cellist Rata Kloppenburg, the secret to a successful performance is not impeccable technique or unassailable musicianship, but the ability to relate to members of the audience and actually *perform* for them, rather than just standing on the stage and playing. In the 1980s, Kloppenburg studied cello with Maria Hol at the Zwolle Academy of Music and with Dimitri Ferschtman at the Utrecht College of Arts in the Netherlands. She went on to play with Meander Strijkkwartet, a successful

string quartet, for eight years before leaving the group in 1996 to pursue a second career in acting and performance technique.

She is matter-of-fact about her change in careers.

"My failure as a cellist took me into my life as a theater maker," she explains, "so I'm very grateful for the failure."

Kloppenburg's decision to leave the world of classical-music performance was precipitated by a concert her quartet presented of Schubert's "Death and the Maiden." She

THE ART OF PERFORMANCE



recalls that at the time, about ten years ago, the classical scene in Holland was extremely rigid. "I felt suffocated," she says. "There were so many rules about classical music. You had to wear black clothes, and you had to play all the movements of a score."

During the introduction to Schubert's work, she explained to the audience how important love and sexuality were in the composer's life and how ironic it was that he ended up dying of a sexually transmitted disease. The critics were outraged. One

reviewer wrote that the information was entirely irrelevant to the music, and another criticized Kloppenburg for having worn one red shoelace in her black shoe to symbolize Schubert's love line.

"They were really angry," she recalls. "I had mentioned the word *sex*!"

After leaving the quartet, she entered a theater-studies teaching course at the Utrecht College of Arts and went on to study at the Dartington College of Arts in England, where she began working with classical musicians on

Learning to focus on the audience and to gain command of the stage

BY SIMONE SOLONDZ



'Imagine that the music is a present you're giving to the audience.'

RATA KLOPPENBURG

theater technique. She currently works one-on-one with various professional musicians and musical groups and presents seminars on stage presence and performance technique at gatherings such as the European String Teachers Association conventions. Kloppenburg says that many of the techniques and exercises she uses are quite common among actors, but somehow they haven't crossed over to other realms of performance, where they're sorely needed.

EMBRACE YOUR AUDIENCE

The basic problem for many musicians, she explains, is they regard the audience as the enemy rather than as a group of cherished friends who have willingly come along for the musical ride. "Imagine that the music is a present you're giving to the audience," she says. "You want the present to be as beautiful as possible."

Seducing the audience is an important part of your job as a performer, says Kloppenburg. When something goes "wrong" onstage, when your music stand topples over or your chair collapses, she explains, "it's like a present from heaven. It gives you the opportunity to smile to the audience and say, 'Oh, bad luck.' And the tension is broken."

"The audience sees that it's a *human being* there onstage!"

Of course, you can't rely on an accident to help you connect with the audience. When entering the stage, there's a simple routine Kloppenburg suggests to break the ice *before* you begin playing. She tells her students to stand in the place where they will play and greet the audience three times, saying hello first to a friendly face in the front row, then to someone in the middle of the hall, and finally to a particular audience member in the back.

Kloppenburg likens the successful stage performance to the engaging telling of a story. In her seminars, she has students pair off and tell a story to one another. Then they play a little piece for each other. When they've done that successfully, they can move on and play the piece for a larger group of people. She asks them to pay attention to how the experience is different, how they have to revise

their presentation to include more people. It's very much like acting coach Constantin Stanislavsky's concept of "circles of attention." Before you can successfully tell a story to a large audience, you must learn to tell it to yourself, to one other person, to a small group, and so on.

"It's amazing what it does to people's performances when they're imagining this and playing their instruments," she says.

TAKE YOUR BODY WITH YOU

Another important factor in reaching your audience and playing as well for them as you do at home alone is being aware of your entire body. For many players, the focus is too concentrated on the fingers of the left hand or the motion of the bowing arm. Instead, says Kloppenburg, you must bring your body as a whole into the performance.

"Fear makes you smaller," she explains. "You should learn to be big on the stage."

This is another concept that is not new to actors, who employ various exercises to magnify their physical presence before a performance. One exercise Kloppenburg uses in her classes has students walking in place, firmly planting their feet with each step, and then "gearing up" slowly, step by step, until they're running full-tilt in place before bringing it back down to first gear again. While doing the exercise, make sure that your chest is raised, your shoulders are relaxed, and your neck and jaw are loose. There are hundreds of exercises that help loosen up the body and promote physical unity.

MAKE A PLAN

Now that you're fully in your body and ready to interact with your audience on a personal, friendly level, you need to have some kind of plan about how to present the piece or pieces you're going to perform. Why did you choose to play music by this particular composer? Why did you choose this composition or this movement over another? What about it is special to you? When it comes to choosing a program, think about a theme or story line.

How will you tell that story to the audience?

In some of her seminars, Kloppenburg has students make up story lines to fit the music. She tells them to think about who is playing this song and why he is playing it. Sometimes she asks students to create an entire character or role around the story and perform the piece in character.

There are many ways to express to the audience your take on the music. Perhaps it's in the way you dress for the performance (think about Kloppenburg's red shoelace at the Schubert recital). Perhaps it's in the program you hand out before the performance, in the lighting, in the stage decorations.

TAKE OWNERSHIP

One of the key elements in your presentation is how you use the space itself. It's extremely important that you become intimately familiar with the hall and the stage before your performance. When great players step onto the stage, they own it. It's like the difference in sporting events, says Kloppenburg, whether the team is playing home or away.

"You should *always* play at home," she says, speaking figuratively. "Get there in time, walk through the space, into all the corners. See if there are special possibilities. Maybe we can use that beautiful chair. Maybe there are many stage doors and we [assuming you are part of an ensemble] can enter from three sides at the same time. Make it your own room, and then invite the audience to enter your space."

"Be their host instead of the other way around."

Kloppenburg recalls a performance that a choir she worked with put on of Rossini's work. "Rossini *loved* eating," she says. "So we read aloud some recipes in Italian, and we had a lot of good smells in the hall. During the break, we served his recipes so we could all eat and drink together, and then we went back to the hall and presented eating and drinking songs. It was so much fun."

"The audience was so inspired."

The most important step, she adds, is triggering the imagination, thinking creatively about what makes this particular performance of this particular piece unique, and getting that across to the audience. **S&S**



BE PREPARED

Essential extras to bring
to your next coffeehouse gig

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Any guitarist who has ever shown up well-prepared to a coffeehouse or small-club gig, only to dig into their pocket and discover in horror that they have forgotten a pick, knows just how crippling it is to be without even the tiniest essential accessory.

To help you avoid this regrettable-but-avoidable dilemma, here are some ideas for assembling a pre-gig checklist. Even if some or many of the suggestions don't apply to you, they should lead you in the right direction for determining your own essentials.

Be sure to draft your checklist and save it in a handy place, like Google Docs or an arm tattoo, and then consult it obsessively before every gig. That way, you'll never be missing that one small piece your music depends on.

STRINGS & THINGS

Whether you play the guitar, ukulele, mandolin, banjo, fiddle, or any other fretted or violin-family instrument, you never know when one of your strings will decide to go rogue and break mid-song. For every stringed instrument that you bring, be sure to have at least one extra set at the ready. This might be a painful investment, but it is one that will pay off in a pinch. And if you swear by a peg winder and string cutter, be sure to bring one of those, too, and while you're at it, any other tools needed for making minor adjustments to your instrument—peg dope, an Allen wrench, 3-in-1 Oil—whatever. Better safe than sorry, and these items are easy to transport.

As for the pick, if you don't want to be forced to improvise one from, say, a

quarter-dollar or a cardboard coaster, bring lots of extras—even if you use those fancy \$35 plectrums (which, incidentally, are worth every cent). Picks have a way of vanishing into the ether, so you should have a decent stash and a convenient way of accessing them mid-song if needed. You might even tape some to a microphone stand, as you see often at rock shows. (If that sounds like a good solution, add gaffer tape to your checklist.) If you're a classical guitarist, don't forget that critical nail-care pack you probably own (or should own if you don't).

Nothing sends an audience heading for the door like a performance afflicted with faulty intonation, so be sure to come prepared with a reliable tuner, whether it's one that clips onto your instrument or exists as an app on your

smartphone. And obviously, don't forget to use that tuner right before you go on.

Think about any other instrument accessories you can't do without—whether straps, capos, slides, cables, preamps, microphones, effects pedals, or rosin—and add these to your checklist, in duplicate if possible. Capos can break and slides can be misplaced, for instance, and having the appropriate backups in place will give you peace of mind.

POWER UP

If any of your equipment is battery-powered—such as an instrument's onboard preamp or an

external tuner—be sure to have backups on hand. And don't forget to check the expiration date to make sure those batteries are fresh. Or if they're rechargeable, give them some juice just before the gig.

For every instrument, microphone, or other cable that you bring, make sure that you have a spare, as it's not uncommon for these accessories to crap-out at the worst possible time—Murphy's Law in action. (Word to the wise: Always buy the best-quality cables you can afford.) And it's best not to assume that a venue—especially a coffeehouse—has sufficient power receptacles for your use. Bring a

multi-socket surge protector strip with you, as well as an extension cord or two.

It's also a good idea to have provisions for powering yourself up. You never know how long you'll be sitting around or what food will be available on site or if you'll have time to grab a quick bite at a nearby restaurant. So, bring a bag of healthy snacks—not empty carbs like donuts and chips, which might provide a temporary energy boost, but can also make you bloated—something more healthful (fruit, raw veggies, certain power/energy bars, and so on), perhaps with protein (nuts, cheese sticks, meat jerky), and a water bottle as well.

To be extra prepared, bring a duplicate copy of your sheet-music set

ODDS & ENDS

If you play strictly by ear, then feel free to skip the next two paragraphs. But if you rely on the printed page, come equipped with a sturdy folding music stand and, if you're playing in a dark room, a small light for the stand (and a spare battery). To be extra prepared, bring a duplicate copy of your sheet-music set, in case one gets misplaced or doused in coffee or beer. If you're reading music off a tablet or laptop, make sure you have a stand or small, low table to accommodate that.

If you're in a situation where you'll be fielding requests, bring a genre-appropriate fake book or a tablet equipped with an electronic version. In a pinch, doing a Google search on your tablet or smartphone will connect you with the chord changes to most popular songs—though caveat emptor, as there's so much harmonic misinformation out there—but your audience might grow impatient with your search.

Remember, self-promotion is the lifeblood of any independent musician, so it helps to have promotional materials at your gig. Bring business cards, CDs, or other items in order to help you score more fans and more gigs.

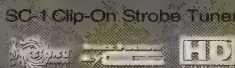
Finally, bring a good attitude with regard to the house-sound engineer—if the venue has one—as well as the management and the wait staff. You'll definitely want to have that personnel in your corner, as you're all in this together, and everyone wants you to succeed.

Adam Perlmutter transcribes, arranges, and engraves music for numerous publications. See his website at adamperlmutter.com.

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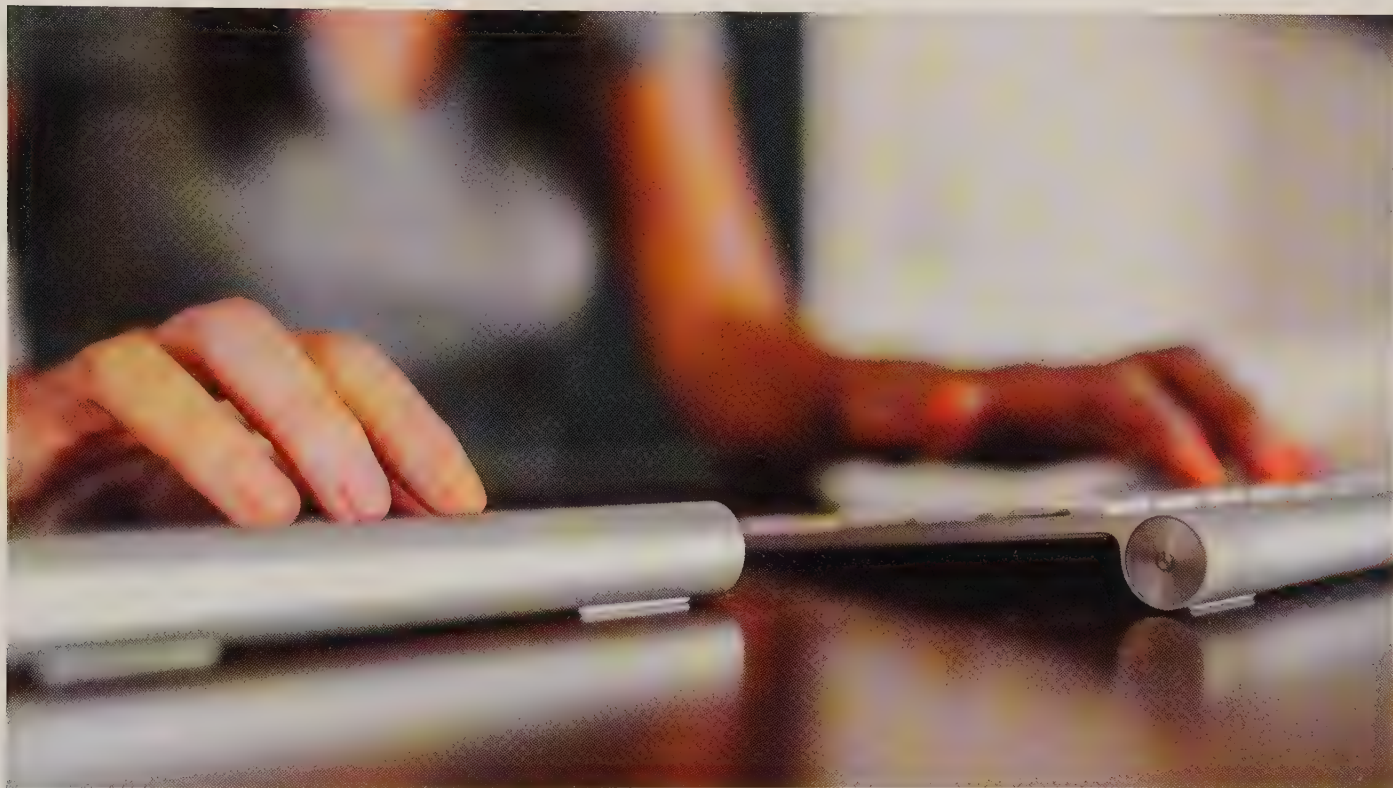
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COLLABORATION GENERATION

Powerful digital tools make it easier than ever for musicians to work together remotely

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER



Musicians have collaborated since the earliest musical instruments were made, some 40,000 years ago, but it's only recently that they've been able to do so without ever meeting each other—in real time, on a phone, no less.

The last decade or so has seen breathtaking developments in software and data transfer technology, to say nothing of the emergence of social networking, smartphones, and tablets. At the intersection of these advances is a range of applications that allow musicians to work together remotely.

The following is a representative sampling—all having basic versions for free—of these exciting and powerful tools.

Since its introduction in 2004, Apple's **GarageBand** has offered an easy way for

musicians and non-musicians alike to create music on their Macs and to share it via MP3, Facebook, and more. The program, which is available for Mac or iOS (included with OS X El Capitan and sold in the iTunes store for \$4.99), turns a Mac device into a fully functioning digital audio workstation (DAW), with a multitrack recorder and everything from software instruments to studio-quality effects, loops, and drum tracks.

GarageBand offers a number of means for collaboration. For example, using a recording interface or your Mac's built-in microphone, you can create an acoustic guitar or ukulele track, for example, and save it to Dropbox, where it can be synched to the computer of a co-conspirator, who can in turn add a fiddle track that will be synched on yours. This

remote back-and-forth can continue for up to 255 separate tracks.

The iOS app can even host a jam session: Through a shared wi-fi network or Bluetooth, up to four people can record tracks together in real time. In this situation, one Mac device acts as a host and records the session, while others can participate by pressing the program's Jam Session button. All of the recorded tracks are linked together as a session. The catch: All players essentially have to be in the same location.

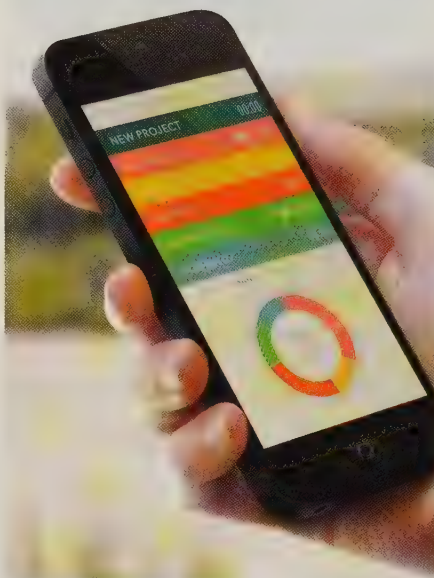
Trackd (trackdmusic.com)—a product of London's Trident Studios, where rock iconoclasts like David Bowie and Queen recorded some of their most vital work—is a streamlined eight-track recorder app for iOS as well as a collaborative platform. (Full disclosure:

My brother-in-law, Aaron Ray, is Trackd's producer.) This app makes it a cinch to upload tracks and invite other musicians to add to them. The final results can be shared on a Trackd profile or via Facebook or email.

Ohm Studio (ohmstudio.com) is a desktop DAW for Windows and Mac that allows users to work remotely in real time, with all changes auto-saved and backed up to the cloud. While artists can use Ohm Studio to record in solitude, they're able to seek out collaborators at any point in a project: users can check out other musicians' work and invite them onboard for their projects, with everyone's data syncing seamlessly. Versions with advanced features, like 24-bit sound and lossless exporting, start at \$44.

The web-based **Soundtrap** (soundtrap.com) works on all platforms—essentially anything with a web browser—meaning it doesn't require that software be downloaded. This DAW allows you to work on recordings wherever you are, using your own axe or a software instrument, alone or with a friend in real-time. Everything is mastered automatically and stored to the cloud for instant access. Subscription-based versions, which

Trackd on iOS



increase the number of features and available projects, are available from \$3.99 per month.

An educational version of Soundtrap, from \$4.98 per student per year, brings the

flexibility of the program to the classroom—kids can record and share projects in the same way that they would with the original program. A highlight of the educational version is the ability of students and teachers to work together remotely through a built-in video feature—handy for group instruction as well as private lessons.

Another web-based application, **Noteflight** (noteflight.com), is an engraving or notation program that allows users to input, print, share, and listen to music on a computer, smartphone, or tablet. In the free, basic version, musicians can create private scores, or invite anyone with an internet connection to contribute to them. At \$49 per year, a premium account adds features like a library of 85 realistic instrument sounds and the ability to enter music with a MIDI controller. As with Soundtrap, an educational version, from \$69 per year, helps make learning music fun.

While collaborative software opens up many musical possibilities, here's something important to keep in mind: There's really no substitute for playing with fellow musicians in the flesh, so don't neglect that aspect of your musical life. **S&S**

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STRINGS OVER SANTA BARBARA

Luthier Kevin Gillies
launches successor to
Healdsburg Guitar Festival

BY PATRICK SULLIVAN



If you've heard the buzz about the first-ever Santa Barbara Acoustic Instrument Celebration, you might have cruised over to the festival's website to check out the long list of luthiers and performers participating in the four-day fall event.

Guitars—steel-string and classical—will be front and center, but they'll be joined by ukuleles and mandolins, as well as some 125 iconic and up-and-coming makers and musicians, ranging from Celtic guitarist Tony McManus to Muriel Anderson.

One name you won't find on the website: Kevin Gillies, the festival's director. But despite Gillies' modesty, the soft-spoken Santa Barbara luthier seems on track to launch a blockbuster successor to the long-running Healdsburg Guitar Festival (north of San Francisco), which closed up shop in 2014.

Stage & Studio caught up with Gillies to talk about what he has planned.

Why did you decide to organize this event?

When Healdsburg decided to no longer continue, there was obviously a big letdown in the whole luthier community. I was working in my shop one day, and I suddenly thought, "Santa Barbara would be perfect for an event like this." So I asked my wife if I was crazy,

and to my surprise, she said it was a really good idea.

How did you get the ball rolling?

The motivation, the real reason to dive in, was to keep a showcase going for the luthier and musician community. So I put out some feelers to figure out who was interested. And the response was quite a bit bigger than I expected.

I was expecting something about the size of Woodstock [the Woodstock Invitational Luthiers Showcase], but it's just sort of grown exponentially. As far as I can tell, there isn't going to be a larger collection of acoustic instruments in one place at one time anywhere in the world.

What role did the Healdsburg Guitar Festival organizers play in helping you get the event off the ground?

Chris Herrod [the Luthiers Mercantile International sales manager who organized the Healdsburg event for years] played a critical role. He was very open about why they had decided to let someone else take over and about what to expect. He provided the contacts I needed in the luthier, musician, and vendor communities to get their feedback on what everyone wanted. He encouraged others

to give a new direction and location a chance, and has been remarkably hands-off in letting it go.

This event will go beyond guitars, right?

I have encouraged other instruments, so there are mandos and ukes and all sorts of guitars other than steel string, including Weissenborn, dobro, classical, flamenco, crossover (nylon and fluorocarbon), bass, and harp guitars, which really opens up the musical possibilities for this and subsequent years.

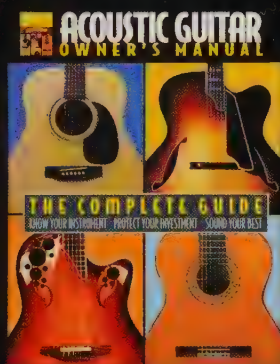
Why is Santa Barbara right for an event like this?

Santa Barbara is a great town because it's small and easy to get around. It has a reputation for being chichi, and there is that element, but a lot of people don't know that this is actually a very ethnically diverse community. It's also probably in the top handful of cities in the world in terms of natural beauty. And the community is hugely supportive of the arts, so there's a lot of great music going on.

What can you tell us about the festival's master classes?

The master classes are all put on by professional recording musicians. We've tried to cover a spectrum of styles, for a variety of skill

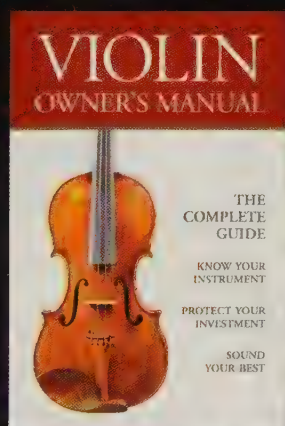
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levels. If you want blues, we've got that. If you want fingerstyle jazz or Hawaiian slack-key, we've got that, too. There are always two happening simultaneously over the three days, so there's always something to choose from.

Why did you decide to hold the event at the Earl Warren Showgrounds?

I like events that reflect the communities they're in. That's one reason why Woodstock has been so successful, in my opinion. The Earl Warren is not an anchor hotel. It's a large fairgrounds. The two main spaces we're using are huge, and there's a big garden between the two. It's got a lot of personality. It will feel uniquely like you're in California at a guitar festival, as opposed to feeling like you're in an anonymous building somewhere.

In addition to well-known luthiers, the festival is hosting many younger makers.

Why was that a priority?

The icons of the craft are getting up there in age, and it has to be handed over to a younger crowd.

There are some really excellent young luthiers who have been handpicked by older makers who will be here. And there are some young, very talented women luthiers that I'm especially excited about because it's been pretty much a male-dominated field for a long time.

You seem to be offering more live music than many other luthier-driven festivals.

We're going to have more than 140 distinct musical presentations in the four days, ranging from 20-minute mini-concerts to two-hour headliners. Part it is creating a sense of excitement and buzz, making it an event. A lot of people who can afford a very nice guitar need a lot more out of a weekend than just coming out and buying a guitar.

And I just think outstanding luthiers and outstanding musicians bring the best out of each other.

The Santa Barbara Acoustic Instrument Celebration takes place Sept. 29-Oct. 2. Details at SBAIC.com.

THREE MORE UPCOMING U.S. LUTHIER FESTS AND GATHERINGS

GUITAR FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

June 20-25

Denver, Colorado

The annual GFA classical-guitar confab—this year at Denver's Metropolitan State University—combines a prestigious competition, performances by top international guitarists, lectures, master classes, and a luthier's fair featuring some of the finest classical-guitar makers, who are on hand to talk about their instruments and will, of course, let you play them.

guitarfoundation.org

WOODSTOCK INTERNATIONAL LUTHIER'S SHOWCASE

October 21-23

Woodstock, NY

Besides offering a plethora of live performances, workshops, special exhibits, and such, the WILS features dozens of top-notch

makers of guitars and ukuleles (and more)—last year's expo featured nearly 70 different luthiers showing their wares, and it's gotten bigger every year. It's a great place to see and play a huge variety of instruments.

woodstockinvitational.com

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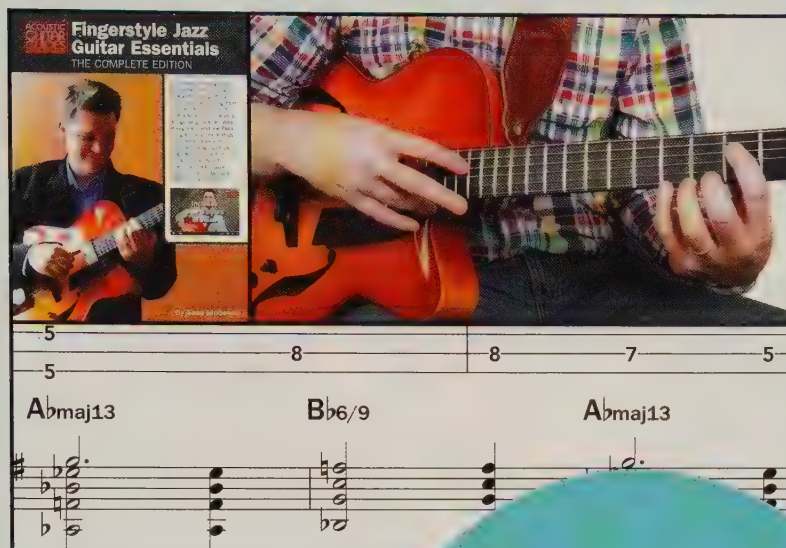
November 13-19

Cleveland, Ohio

The VSA Convention is the largest luthier's competition and showcase for bowed instruments in the US, with many hundreds of high-quality entries from hundreds of makers, as well as in-depth lectures, exhibitions of instruments by contemporary luthiers showing their wares outside of the competition, historical exhibits, new products, and more. This fall's edition takes place at the Renaissance Cleveland Hotel.

vsaweb.org

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NEW PRODUCTS



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D'Addario's new NS Micro Sound-hole Tuner is designed to provide an accurate and unobtrusive alternative to conventional headstock-mounted tuners for acoustic and classical guitars, ukuleles, mandolins and other related acoustic instruments. The battery-powered unit mounts easily via a universal clip that should be safe on most finishes, and once installed provides a multi-colored digital readout that instantly indicates if a string is in-tune or not (and it's degree of out-of-tuneness).

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VERSATILE GO STAND A BOON FOR PERFORMERS

With its foot-controlled page-turning system for digitized scores, AirTurn revolutionized the way musicians read their music (or lyrics, or both) in performance, making difficult page turns on the fly a thing of the past. One of the company's most recent additions to their product line is the goSTAND Portable Mic and Tablet Stand, which should simplify matters even more, by providing a highly adjustable two-in-one stand that will hold both a microphone and, in conjunction with their Manos Mount, a tablet computer or smartphone for close, easy viewing. It's a mere 18 inches (453 mm) collapsed, 58 inches (1475 mm) extended, and weighs a mere 2.6 pounds. A telescoping boom is also available.

\$59

airturn.com

CLEAR AND NATURAL SWEET BLACK ANGEL

The folks at DiMarzio, who have been making high-quality pickups forever, it seems, have a couple of recent entries in the market—The Black Angel passive magnetic and maple piezo soundhole pickups. So far the company's been marketing them primarily to the new generation of percussive fingerstyle acoustic guitarists—two of their high profile endorsers are Mike Dawes and Antoine Dufour, both great players—emphasizing the clarity and natural-sounding ambient characteristics of the pickups, and, particularly in the case of the magnetic pickup, tremendous bass response and sensitivity to harmonics, as well as the flexibility they offer by having a built-in phase switch and compatibility with outboard effects. The two easy to install pickups also work together beautifully.

Magnetic (DP234): \$229.99

Piezo (DP235): \$159.99

dimarzio.com

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Introduced at the 2016 Winter NAMM show, Soundbrenner's versatile Pulse metronome (pictured above) looks and wears like a lightweight watch (or armband) and uses vibrations, colored LED light, or audible clicks to keep you in time, all the time. The Pulse can be used as a standalone device or with an app controlled by smartphones, tablets, and Macs. You can also set a tempo by simply tapping the device. The app also allows players to customize time signatures and subdivisions, save and organize rhythms for future use, and even to link up multiple musicians via Bluetooth. Needless to say, the Pulse works with any musical instrument.

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**American luthier
Stephan Connor travels
to Granada to build a
pair of custom guitars**

by Stephan Connor

Editor's note: Cape Cod, Massachusetts-based Stephan Connor has been building top-quality classical guitars, based in the Spanish tradition, since 1994. Long before that, however, he'd been seduced by the music: "One day, I put on Andrés Segovia playing Bach and something happened," he recalls. "That music resonated with me on such a deep level. I would come home from school, turn the lights off, put on Segovia playing Bach, and it took me out into space. So when I went to college, I was lucky there was a classical guitar teacher there, and I fell in love with playing classical guitar."



Later, he became interested in making guitars, and he learned the craft by studying the work of old (and recent) masters of lutherie. After building around 50 guitars from the “recipes” of those illustrious predecessors, “I treated myself to one of my own design, and quickly adapted an interlocking bracing pattern with my sound portal design, which can be closed with a magnetic door. I had listened to players and knew they wanted a powerful sound with good-quality tone. So I explored ways to keep the best of traditional tone colors, but with more horsepower.”

Evidently, Connor’s design experiments and his meticulous craftsmanship, using both woodworking and metalsmithing techniques, spoke to many guitarists. His custom instruments have shown up in the hands of such illustrious players as the Assad Brothers, Eliot Fisk, Angel Romero, David Tanenbaum, Adam Holzman, Marc Teicholz, and Juan Martin, among many others.

When we learned that Connor was planning to go to Granada, Spain, in the spring of 2015 to build a pair of guitars there—to be captured for a documentary video project—we asked if he would write about his experiences for the magazine. Here is his report.

The city of Granada, in the region of Andalusia in southern Spain, is the ancestral home of the modern guitar. With a fascinating history involving everyone from pioneer Antonio de Torres—one theory is that sometime around 1842, Torres may have gone to work for José Pernas in Granada—to Andrés Segovia (his first concert was given there), the city has inspired countless creative minds: Composers such as Francisco Tárrega, artist M.C. Escher, the American writer Washington Irving, and so many others. The crown of Granada, resting on top of a high hillside, is the Moorish fortress known as the Alhambra. The elaborate patterns, arabesques, and striking architecture make this a beloved axis point for the city. The vibrant guitar activity continues with more than 40 active guitar makers and many *cuevas* on the outskirts of town (the Sacromonte neighborhood), where flamenco continues.

As a guitar maker, I was long curious to visit this focal point of guitar activity, and was fortunate to go there for my honeymoon. The city put a spell on me, as it does to so many who visit. Ever since that first magical visit, I dreamed of returning to Granada and building a guitar there—it felt like a Siren’s call guiding me back. After eight years, the puzzle of how to make it happen came together and led to an adventure of a lifetime.

Over my years of guitar making, I had collaborated occasionally with filmmaker Sky Sabin, and one day we talked about the idea of going to Granada together and then decided to go for it. I would set up a mobile workshop there and build guitars inspired by the Alhambra. This would be an opportunity to immerse myself further



The Alhambra in Granada



in guitar history, music, and lutherie, and Sky thought it would make an interesting documentary.

I immediately set to work designing a portable mini-shop with an engineer friend of mine. It included a go-bar clamping deck for bracing the sound board, a solera board for assembly, and tools for inlay, fretting, and so forth. As I read more about Granada, I learned it has a rich history of both classical and flamenco guitar, so I decided to build one of each, to show the differences and explore both builds there.

We launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise money for our small respective video and luthier teams' plane tickets, and my good friend Eliot Fisk—the great guitarist and teacher—graciously allowed us to use his home in the old town quarter of Granada called the Albaicin (also known as Albayzín).

I set up my workshop on the top floor, and fortunately the humidity level was fine for building guitars in the spring, averaging around 40 percent. Sky and I sketched out a schedule for building and filming for the month-long project, and although it was intimidating thinking about how much we had to do in such a short period (in guitar-builder's time!), it seemed somehow doable.

We had the guidance and support of a local family who said they would show us "the soul of the city," and that actually became the first step in the project. We went to flamenco rehearsals and performances

to understand more about the interaction of musicians with dancers. I learned about the needs of flamenco guitarists—an immediate crisp tone, so you can cut through the percussive dancing and both celebrate and cry with the guitar. Flamenco has some roots as a gypsy music from India, which is heard in the modes and seen in the dance: Look closely and you'll notice similarities in the hand movements in some Indian and flamenco dancers. For inspiration for the classical build, we arranged to study and play a Torres guitar, of course—Antonio de Torres being widely hailed as the Stradivari of the classical guitar.

The next stop was experiencing the wonders of the Alhambra, which not only has a dizzying beauty, but shares with the city as a whole a sort of mystical energy that pulled all of us under its spell. My wife and two-and-a-half-year-old son were with us for the project, and I really noticed my son's eyes sparkling with wonder as we roamed the city, exploring the mazes of the Albaicin's white-washed walkways, hearing street musicians by the Darro river, marveling at the spring flowers that were opening, enjoying the sight of young lovers strolling and swallows curling above in fast flight. It was completely magical, and Sky was right there capturing glorious footage.

Now it was time to build the guitars. I had only three weeks for the process—yikes! Time for coffee, adrenaline, and focus.

I started with the rosette, which I think of as the soul of the guitar. I studied and chose patterns from the Alhambra known as arabesques, cut them from mother of pearl, and inlaid them with carefully chosen colors—pomegranate-red in the classical rosette (that fruit is a symbol of Granada), and a blue background for the flamenco (much of the alabaster decoration in the Alhambra was once painted blue, using lapis lazuli transported from Afghanistan). I cut the mother of pearl outside on the patio overlooking the Alhambra, as sweet, gentle winds and the sounds of neighborhood kids practicing their instruments washed over me.

It was all so blissful; already like a dream. The process was really starting to flow for me now, and my wife and son established their own rhythm of living there—walking through winding streets to markets, collecting lemons in the courtyard, getting to know the neighbors (making friends and having play-dates in the parks). I worked hard building during the day, as Sky filmed the process, and at night we would grill on the roof terrace, drink some wine, and watch the Alhambra become illuminated. Some nights the moon was a crescent, like the symbol of the Moors who controlled the city more than 500 years ago.

The second week of building was intense but productive: Brace the tops, shape the necks, fit the sides, and start assembly. For the flamenco sound



engineering, I went very traditional—seven fans, top thickness around 2.1 mm. I was able to put my influence into the sound (power) a couple of ways: Rosewood blocks to hold the soundboard to the sides (this is one of my subtle innovations; it makes that juncture stronger, so less energy is lost); I used a cypress bridge patch to increase the

cross-grain stiffness a bit and add a touch of sustain; and for the classical, I used my interlocking-star-pattern design, which allowed me to work the soundboard thinner, for a deeper sound. On both guitars I used a modified interior-foot design, which has a shelf under the fretboard, reduces the chance of cracks by the fretboard, and,

more importantly, adds to the strength of tone. Many older traditional guitars don't have the shelf. Why? Torres didn't have a band saw; he used a handsaw. It was harder to do back then with limited tools.

All was going as planned until the third week, when I needed to route the binding channel—the most common step for an



ABOVE LEFT: Connor at work in Granada.

ABOVE RIGHT: With local luthier Antonio Marin Montero

LEFT: The backs of the flamenco and classical guitars.

Photos by Sky Sabin



accident in the process. I had brought my trusty Dewalt laminate trimmer—which I had used for about 20 years—so the potentially tricky step would be less daunting. But even using an industrial power converter, when I turned it on, it sparked and the motor suddenly went kaput. Uh-oh. I didn't want to bother local luthiers, asking for one of their most counted-on tools, so I searched for a similar one. There were no woodworking stores, but I eventually found Brico Depot, the Spanish equivalent of the American chain store Home Depot, and bought the only router, which was enormous. Necessity is the mother of invention, so I clamped on my bearing guide, switched the collet from millimeters to imperial size, and, with a prayer, set up for routing—a step that can destroy the guitar in a second. Apparently there is a god: I routed the channel around the edge without messing up, and proceeded. That boosted my confidence that I could make it through and string the guitars up in time to hear them played in Granada.

The final week, I put on the fretboard, hammered in the frets, and completed the inlays. Then I cut my sound portal in the side of the guitar using a symbol ubiquitous to Granada—the eight-pointed star, two interlocking squares. I had only a day to glue the bridges on and put on a protective layer of French polish shellac. It was so exciting seeing the guitars coming together at mach speed. (I usually build in batches of eight,

which takes six to eight months from start to finish.) It was magical seeing the process unfold in such a beautiful setting, and also having local enthusiasm build for the film project.

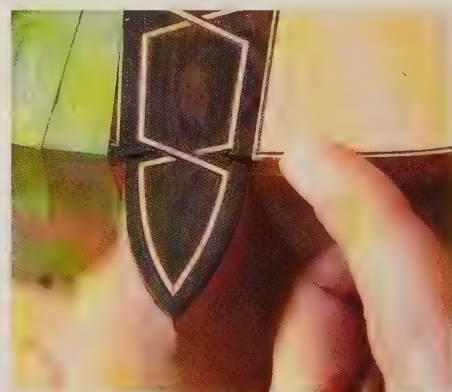
We were able to get permission to record the completed guitars on the grounds of the Alhambra, a wonderful way to wrap up the project. Appropriately enough, the moon was now full.

The filming also included visits to excellent local guitar makers, including the living legend and humble father of the current Granada school, Antonio Marin Montero. The Granada school favors spruce soundboards and an elegant plantilla (guitar shape), smaller than Madrid where so many luthiers build with cedar soundboards. Madrid guitars tend to have a big sound, while Granada's guitars are known for an elegant, clear, beautiful tone. Antonio pulled out a guitar he had made probably 50 years ago with legendary French maker Robert Bouchet. I was blown away: It had the most beautiful shape, rosette, and sound. I was humbled and it got me fired up to improve and try to build on a higher level.

So we all left feeling inspired by the adventure. We all had grown individually, creatively, and spiritually. Granada had smiled on us. The community was amazingly supportive and now, through this film, we can not only show the process, but also share the colorful, mystic soul of that enchanting city.

LEFT: The rosette of the flamenco .
RIGHT: Pablo Giménez plays the classical.

BELOW: Binding placement.



As this issue went to press, the film was in post-production, with an eye toward being ready in time to be released for film festivals in June. You can already see parts of the process and hear the completed guitars played by Granada guitarists at instrumentalplaces.com. Connor kept the classical guitar for himself, but gave the flamenco "as a symbol of thanks to the young star of the film, Pablo Giménez, for his tireless work on the project," Connor says.

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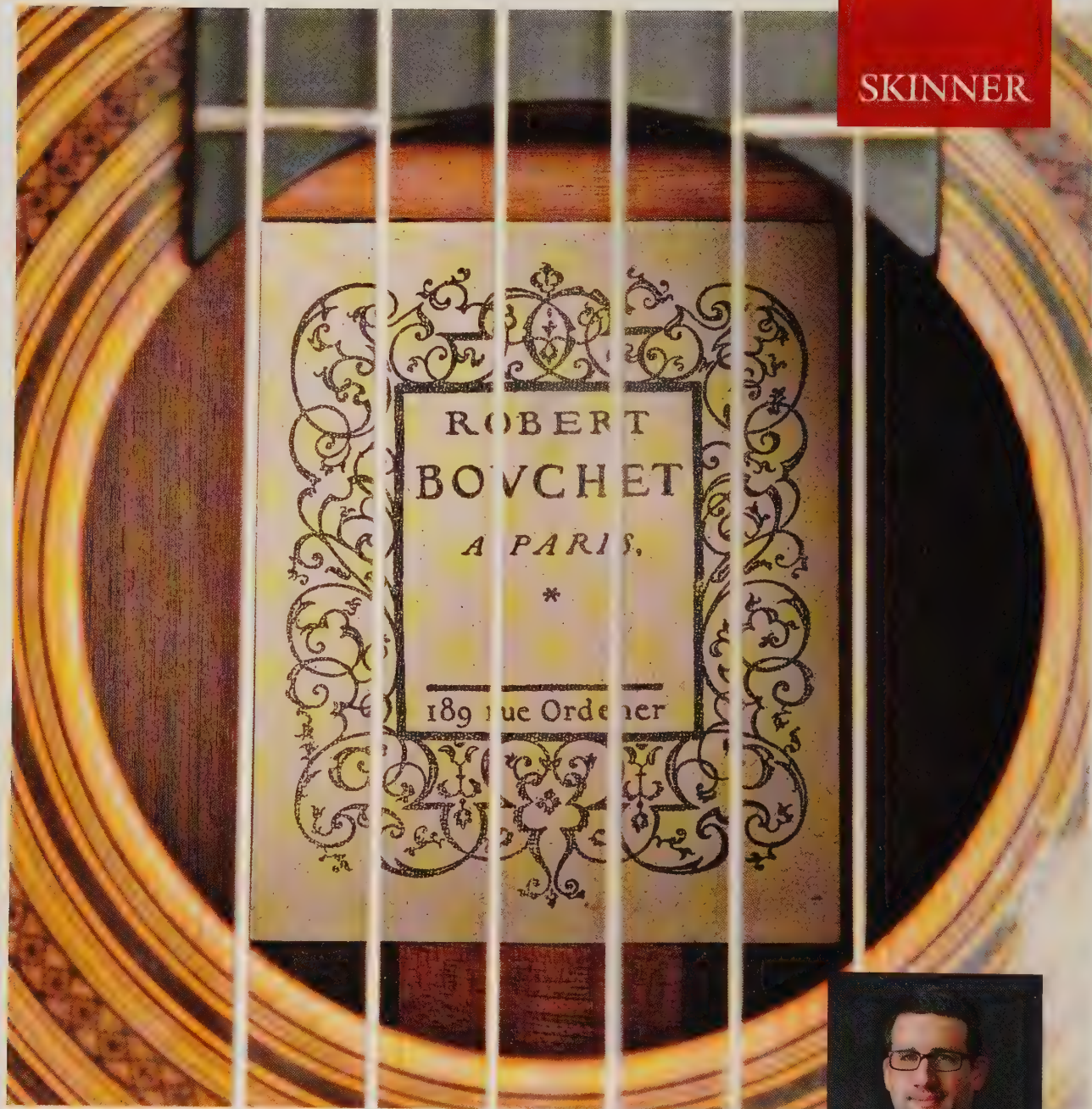
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Andrew York
on improvising
p.60

PLAY

Formula for Success

Tips on improvisation by Dyens, York, and Bogdanovic

60

Rehearsal Room

The art of practice and preparation

64

Method

Digging deep into a Villa-Lobos etude

86



LEARNING TO WING IT

Tips on classical guitar improvisation from
Andrew York, Roland Dyens, and Dušan Bogdanovic

by John W. Warren

The first step, and in some ways the most difficult one, is to wrap your head around the idea of improvisation on the classical guitar. What precisely is improvisation, and what is not? A familiar part of the musical toolbox for guitarists specializing in jazz, flamenco, bluegrass, blues, rock, and other genres, improvisation has been relatively neglected, if not exactly derided, in modern classical guitar. This extends to classical music in general, of course. But considering the history of classical music and the evolution of the guitar, it's perhaps surprising that improvisation does not play a larger role.

Improvisation was commonplace in early classical music. Musicians from the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods improvised ornaments such as trills, mordents, *appoggiatura*, and other embellishments; composers such as

J.S. Bach, Mozart, and others extemporized whole forms, including the *ricercar*, fugue, and variations. Today, this body of music seems canonical and not apt for ad hoc experimentation. The concerto's cadenza was originally a section between movements allowing soloists to demonstrate their skills as improvisers, until the 19th century, when composers began to write cadenzas down in full. Lute and vihuela performers often improvised a "prelude" in order to test the instrument or as an introduction to another piece of music.

An improvisational "prelude" is a signature of French guitarist and composer Roland Dyens, one of today's foremost improvisers on the classical guitar. "It's almost a superstition, to me," says Dyens from his apartment in Paris. "I love to improvise, and beginning a concert with an improvisation is the best way for me to

check the sound in the performance space, to gauge the public's mood and reaction, to warm myself up, to feel my guitar. And it connects me to the tradition of the prelude."

Improvisation can be many things—a leap into the beyond, spontaneity, a bit of risk. It can be defined most broadly as extemporaneous composition or ad-libbed performance of a musical passage not prescribed by notation or other text. Creating a new rhythm, contemporaneously embellishing a harmony, inventing a new melody or a variation on a melody "in the moment," are all approaches of improvising.

"One way to think about improvisation is as composition on the spot," says acclaimed guitarist, composer, and improviser Andrew York, who spoke to me from his home in Los Angeles. "When we improvise, we're in a Zen-like moment, playing ideas that are coming, hopefully, without too much thought. Someone who improvises well, however, can have a larger temporal sense—a greater sense of time—and get an idea of a form developing. It's pretty complex, really, to have this larger perspective at the same time you're in the present."

LIQUID COMPOSITION

Few prominent classical guitarists improvise on a regular basis; it's undoubtedly not coincidental that most of these practitioners are also accomplished composers for the instrument. While improvising is not a prerequisite, the two disciplines appear to be complementary. Dyens notes, "I have some close friends who are outstanding composers who really don't know how to improvise three notes together. For me, being a composer implies being an improviser, but it's not always the case."

Dušan Bogdanovic, the US/Serbian guitarist and composer celebrated for his dazzling improvisations, adds from his home in Geneva, Switzerland, "I've written in my book *Ex Ovo* that at best, improvisation would be as structured as composition and composition would be as fresh and inspired as improvisation."

Improving your improvisational skills

'When we improvise, we're in a Zen-like moment, playing ideas that are coming, hopefully, without too much thought.'

—ANDREW YORK



and practice can also help lead to or improve compositions on the guitar. "A lot of my pieces were based on or were born out of an improvisation," York says. "I might be improvising, just playing around on the guitar, and stumble onto something that seems really meaningful, poignant, with a bit of magic to it. I try to record that very quickly on my iPhone, to capture the intent, that emotional moment, and later I can hear it again, to use as a springboard for developing a theme." He cautions, however, "As soon as you start messing around with technology, you're completely out of that state of creation. It's critical to stay in that frame of mind where creation is happening, and not start using those parts of the brain that you use to manipulate technology."

In a 1989 *Classical Guitar* profile, Italian-born guitarist Carlo Domeniconi, who has spent much of his life in Turkey, argued that all guitarists can and must learn to improvise, which he called "liquid composition." Richard "Rico" Stover writes in *Six Silver Moonbeams*, his epic biography of Agustín Barrios Mangoré, that the great Paraguayan guitarist was a legendary improviser, which is hardly surprising considering his marathon bouts of practice, his background playing popular dances, and his prodigious memory. Evidence indicates that Barrios continuously revised

his compositions and had a penchant for improvising new passages in concert; for Barrios, music was a mystical act.

Bogdanovic and York agree that the pressures on today's classical guitarists—and classical musicians in general—to perform at such high technical levels have resulted in a lack of attention to and practice of improvisation. "Classical and contemporary music demands so much attention and technique that it's very tough to match that with symmetric work on improvising," says Bogdanovic. "My opinion is that one has to sacrifice one in order to gain the other. But I do think that classical musicians, and guitarists in particular, should have consistent instruction in improvising and I see some signs of this, especially in the US."

"As the pedagogy increased, and classical guitarists were playing more and more complex pieces, it took a lot of effort to play at this high a technical level," adds York. "The other thing is that it's a lot easier to be an extremely proficient technician than a very good improviser or composer. Every year, we've got a deluge of hotshot young musicians winning competitions, but we don't have a bunch of great composers emerging on the scene each year. It takes a lot to be a great player, but it takes, I think, exponentially more skills to be a great composer."

GETTING 'INTO THE MYSTIC': TEN TIPS

Classical guitar students may encounter a lack of standard practice and instruction in improvisation. Gerald Klickstein, in *The Musician's Way: A Guide to Practice, Performance, and Wellness*, encourages students to embrace improvisation as a component of the "musicianship zone," along with sight-reading practice; practicing scales, arpeggios, etudes, and so forth he designates as part of the "technique zone." Improvisation is an act of surrender, delving, as Van Morrison called it, "into the mystic." Classical guitarists interested in developing or improving improvisational skills can start with a few relatively simple steps.

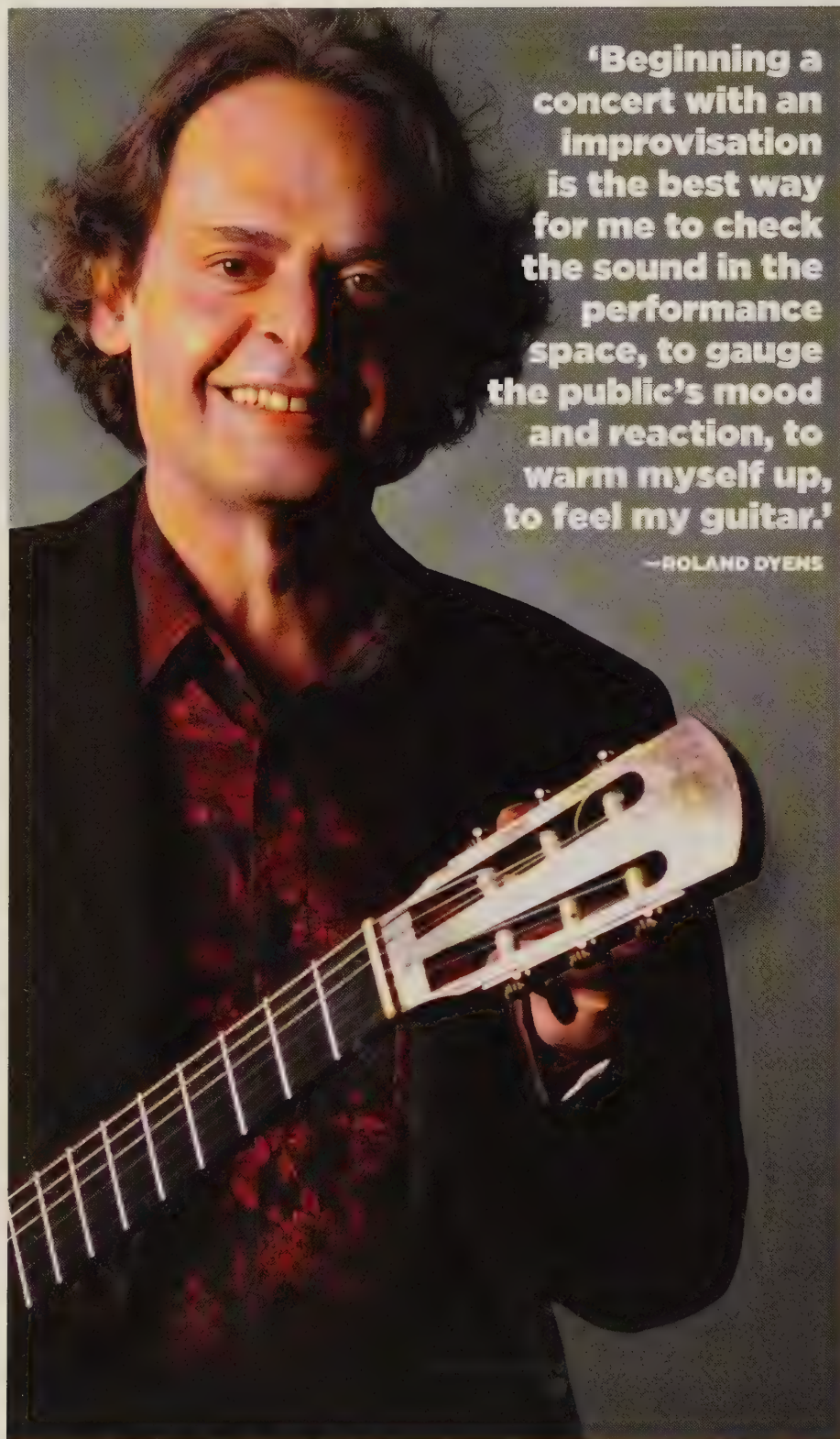
1. DEVELOP YOUR EAR: "The best way to begin is by having a really good ear," says York. "Develop your ear in a way that you can hear the different qualities of each pitch in relation to the whole piece. If you're in the key of G, and play a G major scale over it, every note of the scale should have a noticeably different quality to you, a distinct color. The more aware you are of the way notes relate to a home key, the better you can improvise. If you can't play what you hear in your mind, you can't really improvise."

2. GET POPULAR: "Learn how to accompany songs, such as popular songs," suggests Dyens. "This is the first and perhaps most important step. Then learn to do things with the harmony, discover the inner voices of the song, like contrapuntal motion in polyphonic music. In France, we have the strong tradition of *chanson*, like Georges Brassens, Édith Piaf, Jacques Brel. Or, similarly, use jazz standards, because as you know, most jazz standards used to be popular songs, like 'Over the Rainbow.'"

3. MIX IT UP: Dyens, York, and Bogdanovic are all notable for the diversity of their performances and compositions, and all began to improvise at the earliest stage of learning guitar.

Listen to—and learn to play—a variety of styles, especially those that incorporate improvisation: Brazilian music, Grateful Dead, Turkish music, jazz. "I actually do not see big borders between genres, and for me it is all a spectrum of defined or not-so-defined stylistic characteristics,"

FORMULA FOR SUCCESS



'Beginning a concert with an improvisation is the best way for me to check the sound in the performance space, to gauge the public's mood and reaction, to warm myself up, to feel my guitar.'

—ROLAND DYENS

says Bogdanovic. "Improvising a *ricercar* is not the same as improvising a blues, but at this point I think the styles are largely a matter of history or marketing, and not of creative reality." (Bogdanovic, in fact, is co-organizer of the inaugural Multimod Festival, a conference at the Music University (HEM) of Geneva, in November 2016, designed to navigate such diverse stylistic approaches to composition and performance. See multimod-performer-composer.com)

4. ARPEGGIATE: Delve into a piece such as Erik Satie's "Gymnopédie No. 1," of which several nice arrangements exist for classical guitar. Explore its string of sonorous, melodic chords, first as written, then extend the chords in a light arpeggio movement, and a third time in a more aggressive, free arpeggio. Congratulations, you've just improvised! Vary your approach each time you play the piece, but it's fine if you discover a beguiling arpeggio that you want to reuse. Next, dig into some of the chordal possibilities themselves.

5: BE OPEN: The demands of solo improvisation on a polyphonic instrument like the guitar, sustaining melody and harmony simultaneously, are rigorous. "Start with inspiration and sincerity," recommends Bogdanovic, "but as far as particular keys, from the blues and Carcassi studies to [Benjamin] Britten's "Nocturnal," all roads lead to E, both major and minor." Open keys allow you to use the guitar's open notes as drones when improvising. Try a dropped-D tuning [6th string tuned to D], especially if you are less familiar with this tuning; it may open up some new possibilities.

6. GO BRAZILIAN: Learning and performing the music of Latin American composers can be conducive to improvisation, as the rhythms and melodies are often by nature freer, encouraging ornamentation and other forms of spontaneous interpretation. Guitarist Benjamin Verdery mentioned on his blog that he couldn't help but improvise flourishes as he learned "Julia Florida" by Barrios. Brazilian music offers a particularly suitable entry to improvisation. For many Brazilian guitarists, genre boundaries simply do not exist: popular,

bossa nova, jazz, classical—it's all *violão*. Back when people discovered music in record stores, the albums of consummate performer, composer, and improviser Baden Powell would be more commonly found in the jazz or Brazilian sections, yet he certainly offers gems for the repertoire of classical guitarists. Try "Berimbau" or "Asa Branca," for example, both available in notation and tablature on the website dedicated to Powell, Brazil-on-Guitar (brazil-on-guitar.de).

7. GAIN A LAUNCH POINT AND EXIT STRATEGY:

Two related strategies to improvise within a song include locating a section within a piece that you can use as a springboard into improvisation, and having a "go-to" section to transition out of your improvisation. The latter can be the same musical phrase as your launch point or can differ; you might transition into another piece, for example. The coda of Powell's "Consolação" provides a section geared for launching into an improvisation.

8. COLLECT ODD CHORDS:

Become a cartographer of the guitar by exploring different tonal possibilities around the fretboard. This comes after you've developed your ear—you'll find combinations that are neither commonplace nor fully dissonant. Collect these like seashells, to utilize in unique combinations as you improvise. "When I improvise, I'm usually playing some things I know, that I think might work together, some of the thousands of things that I know might sound good," says Dyens. "Improvisation presupposes a lot of musical knowledge. To have an 'organized improvisation,' something that sounds good, it's like the 'little sister' of a composition. So it's not completely random."

9. BRIDGE THE GAP TO THE STAGE:

After starting with small steps, such as ornamentation and arpeggiating chords, move into more complex improvisation. You'll begin during practice, of course; a guitar competition or concert performance is *not* the place to attempt your first improvisation. After getting comfortable in practice, try improvising in informal performance situations, such as cafés or receptions. These are good



'Improvising in front of people is a challenge . . . but it is also very inspirational and it can produce good results.'

—DUSAN BOGDANOVIC

settings to get into the saddle—as people chat and clink wine glasses, there'll be less pressure on you to improvise flawlessly. Eventually, you may be equipped to improvise in the concert hall and recording studio.

Throughout the recording sessions for my new CD, I performed variants during each take of some of my pieces, while maintaining the same tempo. I even revised the structure of one piece on the fly, and improvised a new ending for another, which I included in the final mix. Improvising during a performance has risks, but it also has rewards. "Improvising in front of people is a challenge," says Bogdanovic. "Of course, it is not the same responsibility as playing just for yourself, but on the other hand, it is also very inspirational and it can produce good results—after all, you are sharing your experience with a larger entity."

10. DON'T FRET: Don't expect every improvisation to be transcendent. The measure of a good improvisation is to be

free, melodic, and not trite; this is an elusive trio. Even the best improvisers find that moments of exquisite beauty are rare. "To be honest—I have a lot of defects but I usually try to be honest—most of my improvisations are simply not very good," Dyens says. "Sometimes, but very rarely, do I think, 'Wow, this one would have deserved to be a piece.' It happens, but it's rare."

York echoes this sentiment: "When you improvise in front of a lot of people, you hope it's going to go well. But it doesn't always go well. I'm not the most consistent improviser, like Dušan—he's a real genius at improvisation. It's not like learning a piece of music to the point where you're 95 percent sure you're going to execute it really well. Grade-A improvisation is not going to happen every single time. But when it works, it's magical."

John W. Warren (johnwwarren.com) has recently released his first CD of original compositions and Latin American guitar music, *Serenata de la Sirena*.

FORGET PERFECTION THE GOAL IS EXPRESSION

Bill Kanengiser, Martha Masters, and Stephen Robinson
talk about the art of practice and preparation

by Mark Small

It's inspiring to attend a guitar recital by a performer whom we perceive to be playing perfectly. Many guitarists, however, experience a mysterious gulf, dividing high-level players from those trying hard to reach that level.

With that in mind, I interviewed a few top performers about attaining that elusive goal of perfection in performance. Not surprisingly, they were united in stating that striving for "perfection" in performance is the wrong goal. Martha Masters, who once won first prize at the Guitar Foundation of America's international solo competition (among other awards) and teaches at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and at California State University Fullerton, doesn't like to use the word *perfection* with her guitar students. "I am not a fan of the 'P word,'" she says. "It prompts anxiety in a lot of people. If you play every note at the right time, is that a perfect performance? It depends on what happened musically."

Stephen Robinson, a top-prize winner in five major international competitions and a guitar professor at Stetson University in Florida, says, "The final goal is to communicate art to the listener. The idea of perfection doesn't count without that element. If you miss a note here or there,

but give a very strong emotional performance, so be it. I'd much prefer to hear that than someone who was onstage just trying to get all the notes."

My interview subjects stressed that there must be a deep level of commitment to the music for a high-level performance. "If you tell yourself that you are making a commitment to a piece and your goal is to present it to an audience, it changes the attitude toward the work that you have to do," says Bill Kanengiser, also a winner of multiple major international competitions, a founding member of the Grammy-winning Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, and an assistant professor at the University of Southern California.

"Once I've made that commitment to a new piece, my first step is to discover the emotional or musical expression that the composer wants to get out," Kanengiser says. "For me, it all starts with a musical perspective. All of the technical problems—being able to play fast enough, loud enough, or smoothly enough—are informed by what you want to do musically." Kanengiser acknowledges, though, that just having a great musical idea in your head won't automatically make it come out in your playing. Much diligent work is required.

BEST PRACTICES

Masters, Kanengiser, and Robinson were unanimous about the importance of proper practice habits. Practicing is a vast topic and countless articles and books have been written about it. Space permits sharing here only a sliver of the philosophy and methods of these three. "What constitutes 'practicing' is not talked about enough," says Robinson. "It's not just going into a room and attempting to play something again and again. If you're playing the mistakes over and over hoping they get better, they won't. You're just getting good at making mistakes."

In her preparation, Masters homes in on the difficult sections of each piece. "I do a lot of spot practicing," she says. "First you need to understand intellectually where the challenges are. Are they in fingering, speed, or not understanding something musically? After identifying a problem, I do a lot of spot practicing at a tempo where I can play the passage accurately so that I am not drilling mistakes." She advocates playing a difficult passage repeatedly to be sure technical problems are worked out. "I think playing a part ten times in a row correctly is good, as opposed to playing it 20 times with some messing up in between," she says. But hitting that mark



Bill Kanengiser



Martha Manners



Stephen Robinson

REHEARSAL ROOM

once doesn't necessarily mean the problem spot is nailed down. "You have to be able to come back the next day and play it correctly ten times, too," she says.

Kanengiser espouses a holistic approach to playing and believes that guitarists need to gain awareness of how they are reacting to the pressure that builds up inside while playing challenging material. "A lot of us build up severe tension in our bodies that has absolutely nothing to do with getting the musical effect we want," he says. "We may clench the jaw, make our eyes squint forward, our torso might be tight, and our legs engaged as if we were going to attack something."

Kanengiser has studied aspects of Alexander Technique, a discipline for improving your performance by observing how the body feels while playing. "You notice how your back, neck, and shoulders feel when they are loose," he says. "If you start playing with that in your consciousness, you note when you have that loose feeling and when it starts to change as you play. Is it when you shift, increase the tempo, or try to play louder? When you feel that, ask yourself if tightening up is actually helping you to accomplish your musical goal. The answer is invariably no. If you find a way to play those things without tightening up, it's easier and the phrase comes out better and is more dependable."

Robinson has identified positive and negative approaches to practicing. "If you're playing things too fast and [trying to learn the music] too quickly, you'll spend the next three years working to take out all the mistakes you've learned," he says. "That's working in a negative direction. If you start with a positive practicing approach, there are no problem spots. You play *only* as many notes as you can play well at a tempo that you can manage. As you allow that to grow, you are always adding more notes, more expression, phrasing, articulation. You're always adding to the piece and never having to take any junk out."

MENTAL CLARITY

As part of the commitment to a piece, many players utilize visualization techniques to

thoroughly learn a work. "This process of visualization—where you are able to see your hands on the fingerboard in your mind and say the names of the notes under your fingers—is so important," Robinson explains. "It's like going over the piece with a fine-tooth comb. You'll hit spots where things become fuzzy and you can't figure out what comes next either aurally or visually. Those are the places that are potential memory slips. Once you get it all clarified, you'll be amazed what it does for your confidence onstage."

Robinson's philosophy is that most guitarists are practitioners more than performers because they spend the majority of their time practicing. "Realize that your job is to be a practitioner," he says. "When you sit down to practice, think of what you can do today to become a better practitioner. If you work [consistently] to practice better, the end result is that you will become a better guitarist. I tell my students that whoever practices the best will play the best."

But despite preparation beforehand, many players walk onstage with doubts, feeling that they could have done even more to prepare. "My mantra is that I've done as much work as I can up to that point," says Kanengiser. "Whether it's enough or not is out of my control once I go onstage. More important than playing perfectly, my goal is to communicate the emotional message of the piece to the audience. If something happens, most audience members will either not notice or not care if the continuity and emotional message of the piece are carried through. But if your only goal is to not make a mistake, then as soon as you do, you feel like a failure. Music unfolds in time and we can worry about what's coming up or lament what's just happened. Or we can just be in the moment expressing the piece. It's human nature to worry about what's coming up or curse ourselves if something didn't go as we wanted. But the strategy for when something goes wrong is that you instantly go back to *now*. Think about the sound you are making and the expression. When you do that, there's no room in your consciousness for what's ahead and what just happened."

CG

FOUR MORE TIPS

Allow enough preparation time before debuting a new program for an important concert. Play it three times in advance before a friendly audience.

—Masters

Using a mirror to observe your body posture and hand position is helpful. Be careful, though, not to stare at it if that causes you to turn your head and produce tension. Videotaping yourself instead solves that problem.

—Kanengiser

Singing the melody, middle voice, or bass line of a work as you practice greatly deepens your knowledge of the piece.

—Robinson

Consult the scores of pieces you've memorized frequently. Use the music for the first few times you play through a piece in practice sessions to be absolutely sure that you're playing everything the composer put on the paper.

—Robinson



JOHN FETTERMAN PHOTO

DAVID RUSSELL'S THOUGHTS ON RECITAL PROGRAMMING

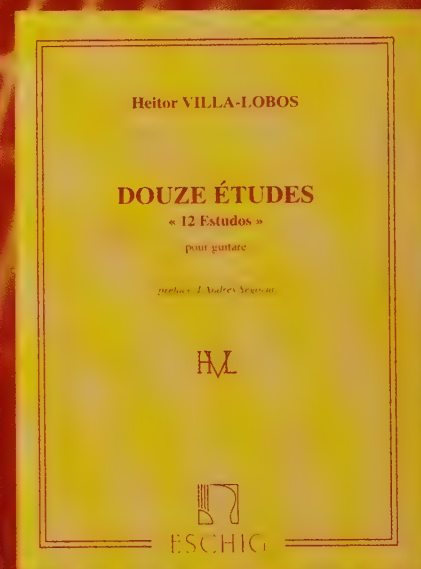
"There are many valid points of view in the elaboration of a program. The most obvious are a monographic program of one composer or one style, or a [program with] a variety of styles and composers.

"There must be a natural progression from one piece to the next, both for the listener and for the performer. Sometimes I find that an intellectually logical program ends up being uncomfortable in its execution. For this reason, I always try out the complete program to test it before I play it in public.

"The progression between pieces can be by contrast, by similarity, by relative tonality, by historical progression, or for many other reasons, all of them valid depending on the situation in which one is going to play. It is interesting to look for a scale of emotion so that the energy goes in crescendo during the whole concert.

"The most important thing for me is that the combination of pieces and composers must be comfortable for the listener and for the player. It would be wonderful to be able to have a specific program for every occasion, because each public is different. However, being realistic, I think that it is possible to choose a program that can offer enough variety and innovation to satisfy a wide diversity of audiences."

—David Russell



ENHANCE YOUR TECHNIQUE BY DIGGING INTO VILLA-LOBOS

by Rhayn Jooste

In this digital era of crafted, “perfect” performances, there is a constant motivation for guitarists to be musically and technically better. Striving to achieve ever-higher plateaus involves playing studies, *lots* of studies. Therefore, it is worth appraising your approach to learning studies. Are your studies played one after the other, in hopes that the mere *process* will help improve your technique? This article, focusing on the great Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos’ “Etude No. 1,” will introduce you to the concept of creating “micro studies” of musical material, or “educated etudes.” Hopefully, this approach will improve your technique and give you a new way to look at pieces.

It would be beneficial to have a copy of the full “Etude” on hand. Please note that for bar numbers, this lesson is based on the Max Eschig edition, 1990.

OVERVIEW

“Etude No. 1” is considered a rite of passage for classical guitarists. Its demanding perpetual-motion right-hand pattern with its colorful barre chords, is, according to Uruguayan composer/teacher Abel Carlevaro (whom Villa-Lobos admired, and vice versa), meant to create an “atmosphere of harmonic resonance.” The piece inaugurates a set of 12 studies, originally composed for the modern classical guitarist in 1928, and still highly relevant today.

Micro Study No. 1

Sequential planting (pre-contact play) of each note to develop touch.

On the surface, “Etude No. 1” offers only two technical challenges: a continuous right-hand pattern, and a series of static chords. However, by digging a little deeper into Villa-Lobos’ material, it is possible to bring to light methods of working on independence; sequential planting; touch; equal left-hand strength; and coordination.

The approach to these challenges will be split into three main parts: The first deals with mastering and controlling the right-hand fingers; the second, with the independence of the left-hand fingers; and the third, with coordination and fluid execution. Once all three of those objectives have been attained and no longer pose technical challenges, the work begins on

making this study *musical*. Keep in mind that striving for note clarity while executing this pattern is not easy, so engage each micro study with slow, methodical, and mindful repetition. Ideally, this will allow the fibers in your muscles to retain the information and make it available unconsciously, like your heartbeat.

RIGHT HAND

The right hand is the central driving force in this etude due to its *moto perpetuo* movement. In order for this to be viable over the length of the piece, your hand must be totally relaxed, with no extraneous effort or motion. Apart from having four digits playing the strings, your arm will also need to

move forward and back as it descends and ascends from string 6 to string 1.

Micro study **No. 1** utilizes sequential planting (pre-contact, then play) across open strings. This fosters confidence and fine-touch habits and is crucial in order for this micro study to succeed. The process of rhythmic displacement is used for cementing the finger pattern; play through bar 1 as written, then utilize the rhythms in each bar of line 2 (with the right-hand finger pattern) progressing on to line 3’s 16th notes. Begin at a slow tempo, and increase it when it becomes effortless.

Once the right-hand pattern is undisturbed and internalized, the next goal is finger independence within the sequence.

METHOD

Micro Study No. 2

⑥ string highlight

⑤ string highlight

④ string highlight

⑥ string highlight

⑤ string highlight

④ string highlight

p i p i p m i a m a i m p i p i

TAB: 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2

③ string highlight

② string highlight

① string highlight

③ string highlight

② string highlight

① string highlight

p i p i p m i a m a i m p i p i

TAB: 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2

Micro Study No. 3

Left hand finger independence: concentrate on even tone and volume.

1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2

2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3

3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4

TAB: 11 12 11 12 11 12 8 9

a i a i a i a i

a m a m a m a m

m i m i m i m i

X3

Left hand finger independence: concentrate on weaker finger movement.

2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1

3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2

4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3

TAB: 12 11 12 11 9 8

i a i a i a i a

m a m a m a m a

i m i m i m i m

X3

Micro Study No. 4

Create even switch between chords; slow and perfect placement before velocity. Learn to recognise the order of L.H. finger placement.

This is achieved through highlighting each finger as it plays (No. 2). Highlighting does not mean accenting, thereby using more force; in fact it is the opposite—you will be subtracting force. Think of your fingers as having volume dials: Instead of turning up an individual finger—the “accent”—turn down the other three to reveal the finger. This is done in sequence, focusing on each string in turn. If primed correctly, it allows the pattern to take on a certain rhythmic swing, which will add a level of authentic sophistication to any interpretation.

LEFT HAND

The left hand in “Etude No.1” is more often than not static and only changes every two bars, apart from a slurred break in bar 25. So the first item to approach is separating chord shapes from the right-hand pattern. Beginning at bar 1, strum through each chord in the progression, while building in the guide fingers and requisite fingering. This procedure will make for quicker changes when the tempo picks up, as the fingering will no longer require as much thought. Once the chords are internalized, it is worthwhile to spend some time shifting between them. There should be minimum squeaks on the strings; focus on quick releases and on individual finger placement.

The next micro study, No. 3, aims to train left-hand finger independence, employing the legato run from fret 12 down to fret 2 in bar 25. If practiced with the specific left-hand finger combinations, it will build equal strength across the hand. There are further suggestions below the

music for right-hand fingers, once the left hand is comfortable. These will help foster synchronization. One final suggestion: Use your eyes to pinpoint the required fret *before* shifting the left hand to it, almost like a laser beam. This micro study comes with a forewarning—it should be played slowly at first, and never more than three repetitions per finger combination, at least until stamina and strength are developed.

BOTH HANDS

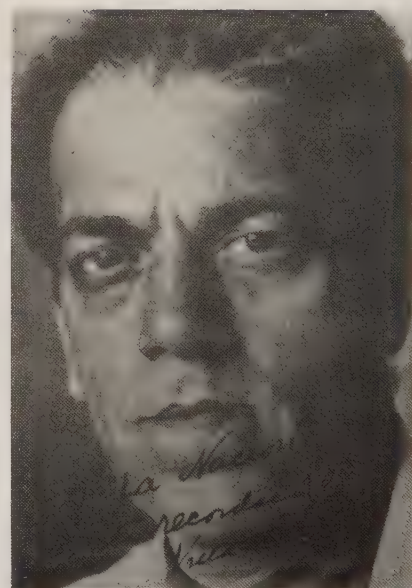
The focus of the final micro study (No. 4) is coordination. As “Etude No.1” must sound fluid to be successful, the chord changes need to be stepped up into the virtuoso realm. Don’t worry—this can be done by cutting down the right-hand notes incrementally, one string at a time, thus speeding up the rate of finger alteration within the chords.

Key to realizing these changes is placing the left-hand fingers sequentially as the pattern unfolds, not all at once; this cultivates excellent synchronization of both hands. The blueprint of this micro study can be employed to secure any intricate chord changes within “Etude No. 1.”

FINAL REFLECTION

The central tenet of this lesson is not about playing the piece end to end, so much as using it to maintain and work on proficiency and technique. The bottom line is this: If segmented and played every day, this approach will enhance and strengthen your technique. From there, your first full performance of “Etude No. 1” should be relatively undemanding.

CG



Heitor Villa-Lobos

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REVIEWS

Tools of the Trade

Alvarez's versatile AC65HCE is a handsome hybrid of classical and steel-string styles

74

Discs

Ali Arango, Pepe Romero and Daniel Ho's *Aloha España*, Matthew McAllister, *Royal Winter Music*, Brian Farrell's *By Lindisfarne*, more

76

Print

Sebastien Llinares, Stephen Goss' *Carmen Fantasy*, 8 studies by Andrea Orsi, Angelo Gilardino duo piece, two concertinos by Guido Santórsola, more

84

Stage

A London tribute to Paco de Lucía from former collaborators

90

HANDSOME HYBRID

The Alvarez AC65HCE blends elements of classical and steel-string guitars

by Adam Perlmutter

To the uninitiated, a classical guitar isn't much different from a steel-string acoustic. But to anyone more than casually acquainted with either instrument, the distinctions between the two aren't the slightest bit subtle. Different string types aside, a classical, with its wide neck and flat fretboard, feels a world apart from a steel-string, with its narrower neck and radiused fretboard. A crossover guitar like Alvarez's AC65HCE bridges the gap between the classical and the steel-string. With a long and relatively narrow neck, the guitar feels a lot like a steel-string, but sounds like a classical—at a tiny fraction of the cost of a concert instrument.

TONALLY INSPIRING

The AC65HCE is a member of Alvarez's Artist series of solid-topped guitars and ukuleles. It's built with old-school details like the Spanish heel neck joint and tapered fan bracing. But its 22-fret neck and 14th-fret neck-to-body junction are a departure from tradition, as is its truss rod, allowing, of course, for the adjustment of the neck's curvature. Smaller non-standard details include a strap button mounted at the end block and another on the neck heel.

The big hunk of plastic that is the guitar's preamp notwithstanding, the AC65HCE is quite handsome, looking more like a boutique instrument than a budget offering. Its thinly grained cedar top has a warm amber glow, to which rosewood binding and a wooden mosaic rosette offer an elegant counterpoint.



AT A GLANCE

ALVAREZ AC65HCE

BODY

Solid western red cedar; mahogany back and sides; natural gloss finish

NECK

Mahogany neck with rosewood fretboard; 650mm scale length; 48mm nut; chrome open-gear tuners

EXTRAS

D'Addario EJ45C Pro-Arté Composite strings; LR Baggs Stagepro EQ and Element pickup

PRICE

\$679 list/\$429.99 street
Made in China.
alvarezguitars.com

Imported low-price guitars, once notorious for their shoddy construction, have seen dramatic improvements in craftsmanship in the last couple decades, and the AC65HCE offers good evidence of this trend. It's built tidily from stem to stern. The frets are perfectly smooth, and so is the body's high-gloss finish; the inlay work is clean and precise; and inside the box, you won't find any glue gobs or other sloppiness.

FEEL AND SOUND

A nylon-string guitarist might at first feel disoriented on the AC65HCE, especially when venturing past the 12th fret. Conversely, steel-string players looking to branch out to the nylon-string will feel right at home, though the neck's side-dot position markers stop abruptly at the ninth fret, and this too can be disorienting.

The AC65HCE's action is nice and low, and the guitar is a smooth player all around. Its nut—48mm as opposed to the customary 50mm—not to mention its slender neck profile, makes it easy to play full barre chords and to fret bass notes with the thumb. It's a neck that will also feel great for a player with small hands.

As would be expected of a guitar in its price range, the AC65HCE doesn't necessarily have the volume, projection, and sustain of a fine concert instrument. But, thanks to its solid cedar soundboard and mahogany back and sides, it does have a sweet, warm sound that works well for everything from Leo Brouwer etudes to solo bossa-nova arrangements to sophisticated pop accompaniment.

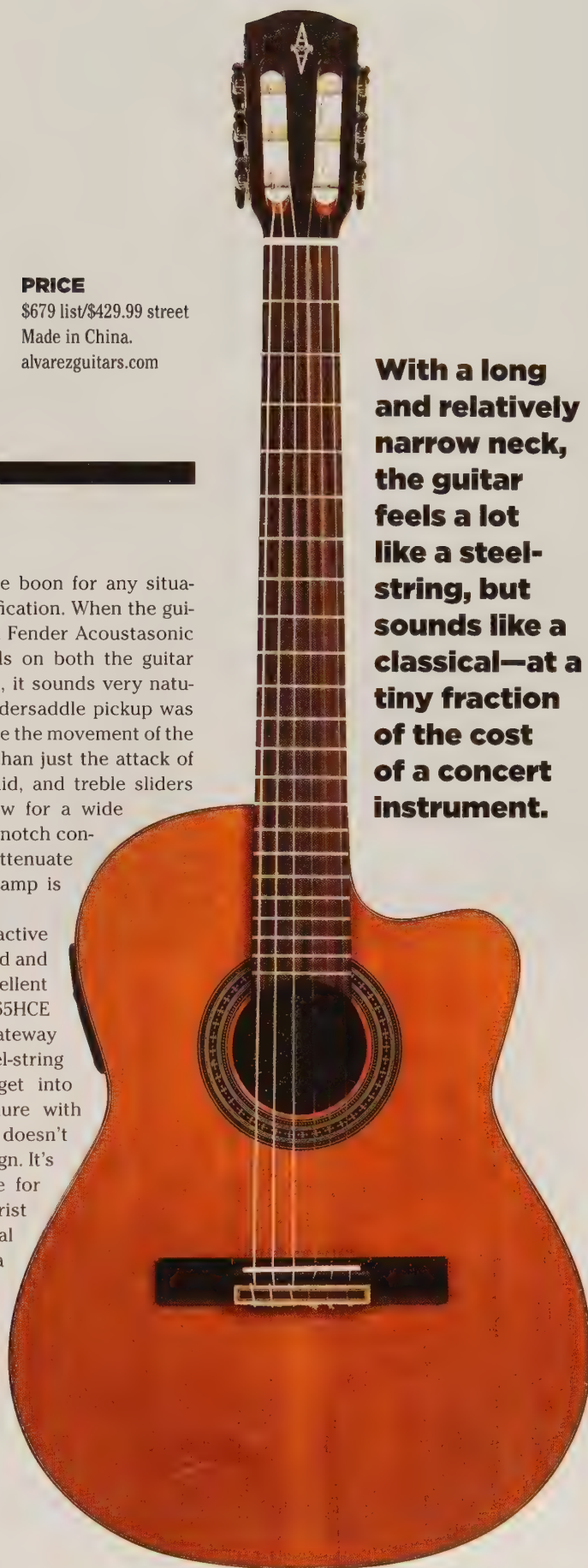
The guitar's onboard LR Baggs elec-

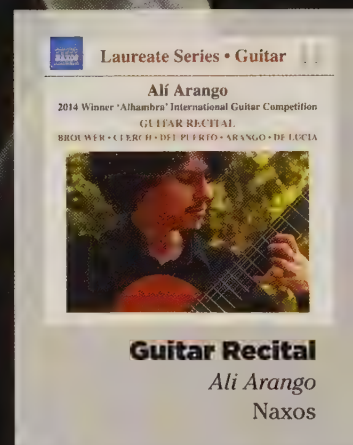
tronics are a definite boon for any situation requiring amplification. When the guitar is plugged into a Fender Acoustasonic with the EQ controls on both the guitar and the amp set flat, it sounds very natural—the Element undersaddle pickup was engineered to capture the movement of the soundboard rather than just the attack of the strings. Bass, mid, and treble sliders on the preamp allow for a wide tonal range, and the notch control works well to attenuate feedback when the amp is turned up.

With its attractive sound, both amplified and acoustic, and excellent playability, the AC65HCE is an excellent gateway guitar for the steel-string player looking to get into the classical literature with an instrument that doesn't feel completely foreign. It's also a smart choice for the recording guitarist in need of fresh tonal colors. And, with a street price of under \$500, the guitar is quite a bargain.

Adam Perlmutter transcribes, arranges, and engraves music for numerous publications. See his website at adamperlmutter.com.

With a long and relatively narrow neck, the guitar feels a lot like a steel-string, but sounds like a classical—at a tiny fraction of the cost of a concert instrument.





CUBAN GUITARIST OFFERS NEW INSIGHTS INTO BROUWER

by Paul Fowles

Though its catalog is unquestionably illustrious, the Naxos Laureate series has, by its very nature, a tendency to generate recordings that follow a formula. We all know how it is: Note-filled heavyweights from the highest echelons of the repertoire, performed with breathtaking precision and humbling velocity, alleviated by an isolated unknown work that's usually the commissioned set piece from the competition the performer won, included in order to get the deal. Cuban guitarist Ali Arango, victor in the 2014 Alhambra Competition, toes the line by including the competition piece by David del Puerto, but elsewhere unleashes a Naxos Laureate disc that's unequalled in its originality of thought. The only familiar item is Leo Brouwer's "El Decamerón Negro," and even there Arango applies his individual stamp by taking up the composer's oft-spurned invitation to reshuffle the

movements. More importantly, Arango delivers "El Decamerón" with a degree of precision and vitality that breathes new life into this much-loved contemporary classic.

Small wonder, then, that Arango was picked to premiere Brouwer's *Danzas Rituales y Festivas* at the composer's 75th birthday celebrations. The first series of this recently minted work opens the present disc and is without question another Brouwer success in the making. Restrained and genial in countenance, it is unmistakably the work of a composer who, in his mature years, no longer feels the need to grab anyone's ear.

This understated Brouwer gem, in the company of four sophisticated Arango originals and an exhilarating finale from the Paco de Lucía legacy, makes for a compelling outing from a formidably talented guitarist of the new generation.



French Collection

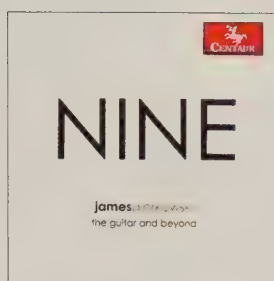
Matthew McAllister
Baros Records

Matthew McAllister's Gallic journey spans centuries of fine music

Scottish guitarist Matthew McAllister has successfully carved out a career for himself at a time when, as many a Brit will confirm, bookings are increasingly scarce on our side of the Atlantic. In this latest fruit of his established link with the Slovenia-based Baros label, McAllister fields an impressively handled program of Gallic middleweights, of which Roland Dyens' arrangement of "Gnossienne No.1" is the most familiar. François Couperin's "Les Barri-cades Mystérieuses" is also a long-standing guitar import, dating back at least to the vintage Alirio Diaz arrangement, although the other two Couperin settings that accompany it are less-well-charted terrain.

However, the main interest lies in the 20th century items—the "Preludio" from the inexplicably neglected *Serenata* by Jean Françaix emerges as an instant hit. Here and elsewhere, McAllister serves up stylish and mature accounts, although it must be said the cross-string ornamentation in the Couperin may be a little plentiful for some tastes. Also noteworthy are the respected, yet by no means over-exploited, "Arabesque en Forme de Caprice" by Francis Kleynjans, the rarely revisited "Reverie" by Alexandre Lagoya, and the Roland Dyens originals "Songe Capricorne" and "Flying Wigs." These are quality examples of the sophisticated conservatism at which many French musicians excel, and all are delivered by McAllister in a manner clearly intended to soothe rather than to stimulate. All this, plus Dyens' wonderfully smoky late-night setting of the Piaf favorite "L'hymne à l'amour" by Marguerite Monnot, adds up to a classy release.

—PF



Nine: The Guitar and Beyond

James Piorkowski
Centaur

Challenging modern pieces, beautifully performed

American composer James Piorkowski has written many works over the years, and is helped here by myriad other players on nine of his own compositions. "Eucharistio" is in one long movement expressing the emotions of grace, joy, gladness, and meaning-well, to use his own words. The piece has a constant flow of music and is written in his rather unusual tonal style. "One Morning in Venice" is a solo piece that celebrates the overlapping peals of bells heard one morning—this, too, is long, complex, and thought-provoking. "Rolando" is a tango dedicated to Roland Dyens and is an unusual piece in both harmonies and structure.

"Eviania" is named after his granddaughter and is a much lighter affair, enhanced by some unusual harmonics passages. The final solo work is "Hear My Train," an homage to Jimi Hendrix that in essence is a caprice, with a feel of musical abandonment.

Other chamber works included here are "El Camino a Oviedo" for cello and guitar, "The Greatest of These" for choir and guitar, "Towards the Light" for guitar and chamber ensemble, and "Hear O Heavens, Listen O Earth" for baritone and guitar.

All these works are beautifully performed, but are of a very modern musical stance that some will find challenging—their musical integrity, however, is never in doubt.

—Chris Dumigan



Aloha España

Pepe Romero and Daniel Ho
Daniel Ho Creations

Surprisingly fresh guitar and ukulele takes on classics

Classical guitar and ukulele? Yes! This is not a gimmick. It's a serious (but spirited) classical album featuring masters of two related instruments, performing 13 pieces heavily weighted to the traditional classical-guitar repertoire, and playing beautiful-sounding instruments crafted by Pepe Romero's luthier son (also named Pepe; he's on the left in the cover photo). If you think the ukulele is some high-voiced little *plink-plink* instrument, you couldn't be more off-base. These ukes (including a six-string model) sound as full and resonant as Pepe Sr.'s guitars, and offer a lovely contrast. Daniel Ho has crafted several ingenious ukulele parts for a trio of famous guitar warhorses, including Francisco Tárrega's "Recuerdos de la Alhambra," Isaac Albéniz's "Leyenda," and Gaspar Sanz's "Canarios." At first it's a bit jarring to suddenly hear new lines in pieces that are so familiar, but Ho's ukulele arrangement work is uniformly tasteful, imaginative, and congruent with the guitar parts, which are superbly played by Romero.

At mid-program, Ho takes over for solo uke versions of four pieces, including the "Prelude" of Bach's *Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major* and "Pachelbel's Canon"; both of those sound surprisingly fresh! Then Romero takes his solo spin on four wonderfully executed pieces: one by Albéniz, one by Federico Moreno Torroba, and two from Heitor Villa-Lobos. The CD concludes with a Romero-Ho guitar duet on Fernando Sor's "Romance."

In the end this is a lot more European than Hawaiian (a slack-key piece or two would've been nice), but it should go a long way toward dispelling outdated notions of what the ukulele is capable of.

—Blair Jackson

DISCS



Frammenti

Giordano Passini
OUS

An engaging “mixed recital” album

Although this 2014 Italian release breaks no new ground, the placing of sonatas by Leo Brouwer and Joaquín Turina under the same roof emerges as an inspired piece of program planning. Separated by more than half a century, both sonatas fully reflect the time of their creation, yet are united in capturing the spirit and idiom of the guitar. Only the best-tuned ear would detect that one is the work of a concert guitarist and the other isn't.

Both enjoy a vivid presentation in the hands of the young and highly able Giordano Passini—the rolling *rasgueado* that concludes the Turina shows an impressive command of a technique in which not all classical guitarists excel. Flanking those two main items are three Miguel Llobet arrangements and four Agustín Barrios originals that will be known to many classical-guitar fans, and all receive a smooth passage. Passini's decision not to explore the lesser-known areas of either legacy is wholly acceptable within the context of this engaging and rewarding “mixed recital” album.

—PF



Four Extraordinary Spanish Guitars

14 works by Dionisio Aguado, Mauro Giuliani, Robert Schumann, Anton Diabelli, J. K. Mertz, William Bateman, Francisco Tárrega, Manuel De Falla, and Frank Wallace.
Frank Wallace
Gyre

Exceptional playing on historic Spanish guitars

The “four guitars” here are historic ones in the Torres tradition: An 1854 Manuel Gutierrez, an 1875 (or so) Manuel de Soto y Solares, a 1910 Manuel Ramírez, and a 1964 Ignacio Fleta. The card sleeve is largely about the guitars themselves, which is a shame because although the composers are mostly well known, some of the pieces played are not—such as the opening Aguado “Fandango Variado,” a wonderful piece that shows off just how little we know of this man's music; it's beautifully played and superbly recorded. His “Minuet” that follows is also a rarity that stands comparison with Fernando Sor's. Giuliani's brief “Larghetto” is followed by Wallace's arrangement of Schumann's “Erster Verlust,” a beautiful work, and a “Minuet” by Diabelli that almost merits being called a scherzo, with its energetic forward thrust. Mertz's introspective “An Die Entfernte” is ravishing in its harmonies, and is followed by the extraordinary “Shaker's Dance” by W.O. Bateman, a work whose score I would love to see. After another, more extended Mertz—“Variations Mignonne”—comes the most well known of the set: Three Tárrega pieces, wonderfully played, with real depth of feeling. A suitably moody “Omaggio” from de Falla precedes two pieces by Wallace—the emotive “Debil del Alba” and the *Suite in Bm*, a four-movement work in Baroque style.

—CD



Guitar Recital (Laureate Series)

Ekachai Jearakul
Naxos

Young Thai guitarist shines on varied collection

Jearakul was the first Asian guitarist (he's from Thailand) to win the Guitar Foundation of America's International Concert Artist competition. He begins with three movements from Sylvius Leopold Weiss' *Suite No. 13 in D Major*. Like so much Weiss, it loses a lot of its gravitas by being transferred from the Baroque lute to guitar. Johann Kaspar Mertz's *Concertino* is a large slice of the composer at his most energetic—this was the work for which he was posthumously awarded a first prize in an 1856 competition. It gets a superb performance here.

Lennox Berkeley's groundbreaking *Sonatina Op. 52* is such a well-known work, yet rarely played; Jearakul's interpretation is top-notch, surely one of the best committed to CD. Luigi Legnani's vast oeuvre is not particularly famous, which is a great shame, as this “Fantasia Op. 19,” with its musical fireworks, would make a fine recital work. Leo Brouwer's works need little introduction, and here his two-movement *Rito de los Orishas* is both dramatic and atmospheric. The rarest works are the three by King Bhumibol of Thailand, and are a real find. The opening “Love Light in My Hand” (arr. Frederic Hand) has a wonderful melody and some melting harmonies in a friendly jazz style; the second, “*Oh I Say*” (arr. Andrew York), is very bluesy; and the final, “Magic Beams” (arr. William Kanengiser) is both languid and energetic at the close.

This is a great recital, excellently played and recorded; a fine addition to the Naxos catalog.

—CD



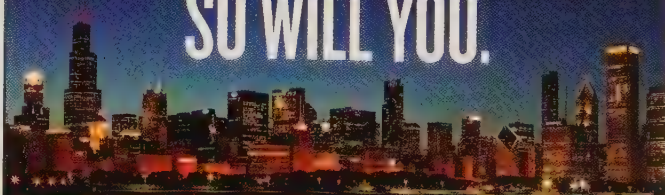
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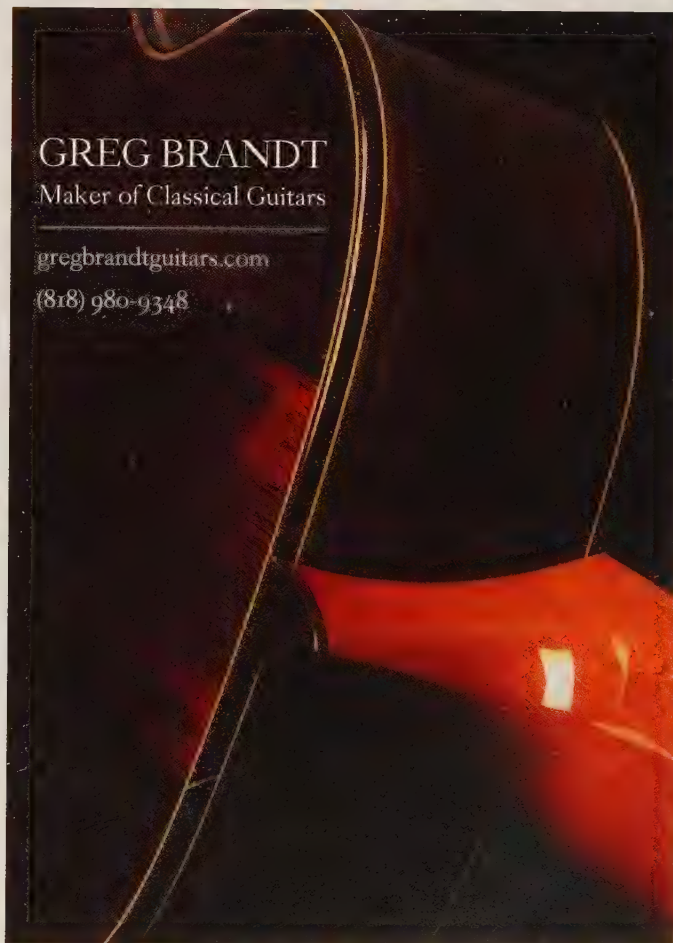
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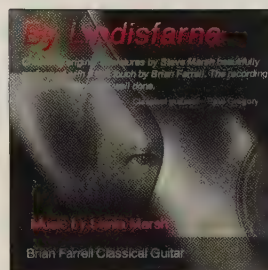
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DISCS



By Lindisfarne

Brian Farrell
brianfarrell.eu

Bucolic beauty and sweet sadness in atmospheric gem

This most recent release from the talented and prolific Irish guitarist Brian Farrell is devoted entirely to music by Steve Marsh—composer of more than 300 works, publisher of many pieces for the guitar and other instruments (through his Lathkill Music), a teacher, and, yes, a writer for *Classical Guitar*. It's a lovely album from beginning to end, brimming with pleasing and often haunting melodies that manage to sound at once affirmative and mysterious.

The first time I listened to the CD, my mind was instantly filled with vivid images of the English countryside—so much of it has a relaxing, pastoral feeling. I looked up some of the places referenced in titles—"Callanish," an ancient stone circle on a remote Scottish isle; "The Derbyshire Suite," inspired by scenic spots in the East Midlands of England, where Marsh lives; "Lathkill," the name of a local river dale; and "Lindisfarne" (*not* the British band of that name I heard in the 1970s), another picturesque island with deep history and mystical connections. Marsh—and his vessel, Farrell—tap into all these places, evoking a wide variety of moods, from bucolic bliss to quiet contemplation to sweet sadness.

The nine "Microstudies" seemingly depart from the composer's concern with *place*, but still feel very much a part of the overall tapestry. And my favorite track may be the lilting final one, "Circle's End," which feels almost like a capstone for the CD's journey. The recording is superb and Farrell's playing sparkles like morning dew throughout. —BJ



New Strings Attached

Nadav Lev
Delos

Uncompromising classical- and electric-guitar musings

It's both inspiring and slightly scary for a reviewer to receive a disc containing not one piece of which he has previous knowledge. So heartfelt thanks to Israeli guitarist Nadav Lev for the program notes for this uncompromising release. Even the personnel take some covering, as Lev is joined at various times by a string quartet, a solo violinist, one soprano, and two mezzo-sopranos.

As becomes clear, Lev's objective was to enhance his repertoire by commissioning Israeli composers whose work he admires. The outcome is at times achingly high-brow—"Nothing to Express" by Yair Klartag was inspired by "a conversation between writer Samuel Beckett and the art historian Georges Duthuit."

In such erudite company, it may seem churlish to mention that the opening of "The Rushing Camel," by Gilad Cohen, bears a striking resemblance to "La Espiral Eterna" by Leo Brouwer. But in fairness to Cohen, his work does go on to find its own voice, as well as providing an impressive outlet for Lev's wide-ranging skills as a guitarist.

Elsewhere, we experience powerful mixes of the traditional and the contemporary in *Three Ladino Songs* by Jonathan Keren and *Four Bialik Children's Songs* by Ronnie Reshef. Separating these relatively conventional offerings is the electronic soundscape of *TalkBack III* by Guy Barash, a format revisited in Lev's own *Shomeret Layla*.

This is not for the fainthearted, but a program that deserves to be heard, from a guitarist with a mission. —PF



RossiniMania

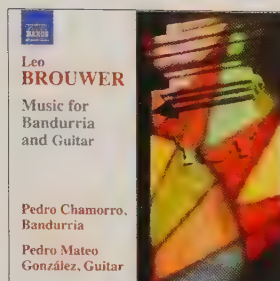
Works by Davide Anzaghi, Marco Reghezza, Roberto Tagliamacco, Niccolò Paganini, Pippo Molino, Alessandro Spazzoli, and Paolo Ugoletti
Eugenio Della Chiara
Discantica

Gioachino Rossini inspires disparate modern pieces

This CD celebrates the life and works of the great Italian composer Gioachino Rossini (1798–1898) via (mostly) contemporary composers whose works in some way reflect or quote Rossini's. They include the overtly dissonant "Rossiniana" by Anzaghi, whose work briefly quotes from the overture of *William Tell*, and the trickery of Reghezza's "Divertimento Ai Capricci della Sorte," which leads on to the almost straight-laced "Fuga" from the same composer. One of the major works here is Tagliamacco's energetic "Soi-ree Rossinienne," an eight-plus-minute slice of imaginative writing aided by superb playing by the 25-year-old Eugenio Della Chiara, a 2010 graduate of the Conservatorio "Gioachino Rossini" in Pesaro, Italy.

Paganini's *Sonata Op. 39* is the only noncontemporary work here, included because of its *bel canto* style, which became a feature of Rossini's operas in particular. Its inclusion is a bit of a stretch, but it is a well-played diversion. Of the remainder, Molino's "Frammento G" is a tonal outing that quotes from the overture from *Cenerentola*, whereas Spazzoli's "Omaggio a Rossini" is dramatic and unnerving in its tension. The final work, Ugoletti's "Fantasia su un Tema di Rossini," has a most attractive cumulative effect, and is based on the 1822 two-act opera *Zelmira*.

—CD



Leo Brouwer: Music for Bandurria and Guitar

Pedro Chamorro (bandurria)
Pedro Mateo González (guitar)
Naxos

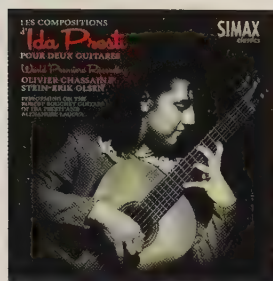
Premieres and some less-played pieces on important release

Starting with a ground-breaking LP by Oscar Cáceres in 1973 (*Oscar Cáceres Interprets Leo Brouwer*), the guitar works of Brouwer have rightly gained a preeminent position in the recorded repertoire. Many have been wheeled out time and again, and few have been entirely overlooked. So a Brouwer disc that contains little that's immediately familiar, along with three premieres, ranks as a landmark release.

It should perhaps be explained that the *bandurria*, expertly handled throughout by Pedro Chamorro, is the mandolin-like Hispanic instrument, as opposed to the *bandora* favored in past centuries by Holborne and others. In the company of the equally able Pedro Mateo González, Chamorro serves a compelling set, ranging from the cerebral and introspective *Sonata para Bandurria* (2011) to the amiable, almost folksy "Musica Incidental Campesina."

When González goes it alone in *Variaciones sobre un tema de Victor Jara* and *Sonata del Caminante*, his subtly persuasive mastery of Brouwer's intricate and idiomatic textures enjoys center stage. Each of these works is dated 2007 and neither is a major Brouwer hit—yet.

The final "premiere" turns out to be a reworking of *Micropiezas*, complete with the valedictory Frère Jacques add-on. New ground it may not be, but these long-standing favorites are convincing in their revised surroundings—a fitting finale to this important addition to the Brouwer catalog. —PF



The Works of Ida Presti for Two Guitars

12 pieces
Olivier Chassain and Stein-Erik Olsen
Simax Classics

A must for fans of the legendary Ida Presti

Anyone familiar with the Presti-Lagoya recordings (that's Ida Presti and Alexandre Lagoya, one of the top guitar duos of all time, active in the '50s and '60s) might not necessarily know much of Presti's writing. Last year, Berben's enterprising production of the Presti-Lagoya collection arrived at Volume Six, which contained the scores recorded here, and also included two extra scores not on this CD, despite the scores' being edited for publication by one of the two guitarists on this disc, Olivier Chassain—unfortunate and puzzling omissions.

As for the recordings and the pieces themselves, they are utterly wonderful and imaginative works that show such a unique character I can only marvel at their complexities and their constant invention. They range from the quite succinct "Danse Gitane"—an unmistakably Spanish-sounding piece—to the very substantial "La Hongroise." Chassain and Olsen chose to use Presti and Lagoya's own Robert Bouchet guitars, and the performances are nothing short of phenomenal—beautifully clear and musical, in spite of the obvious massive technical difficulties involved in these very individual-sounding pieces. This set is a must for anyone interested in the works of Ida Presti. —CD



The Legend of Hagaromo

Aaron Larget-Caplan
Stone Records

Takemitsu, Fujii dominate Japanese-heavy program

When a disc is subtitled "American and Japanese music for classical guitar," it's a safe bet that pieces by Toru Takemitsu will be featured. Here, Takemitsu shows up as composer of "Equinox" and arranger of "Over the Rainbow" and "Summertime." Although not generally perceived as a crowd-puller, Takemitsu enjoys the status of a composer's composer, Leo Brouwer being one high-ranking figure who has paid tribute on more than one occasion. On this disc, "Equinox" is preceded by Brouwer's "Hika, in Memoriam Toru Takemitsu."

However, the collection is dominated by Keigo Fujii's epic single-movement title track. Based on a poignant Asian legend retold in the performer's notes, Fujii's kaleidoscopic creation is at times reminiscent of Oliver Hunt's underrated "Garuda," with which it shares the imagery of extended flight. Aaron Larget-Caplan emerges from this marathon workout as a performer with all the skill and energy required to deliver a truly remarkable contemporary work that has yet to receive the recognition it deserves.

Elsewhere, more modestly proportioned contemporary offerings are the order of the day, with Ken Ueno, Kota Nakamura, and Martin Max Schreiner contributing works that run under ten minutes. All are billed as premieres and all, including the Schreiner, lean toward the Japanese side of the equation, making the Takemitsu arrangements referred to above the de facto representatives of the American element on this eclectic and endlessly rewarding release. —PF

DISCS



Despertar

10 works by Chrystian Dozza
 Chrystian Dozza
chrystiandozza.com.br

Impressive performances of superb, varied pieces

I have come across Dozza's playing before in the superb Quaternaglia Guitar Quartet recordings, so his effortless technique and musicianship come as no surprise, but the compositions are a great find. "Baiao de Dois (Baiao No. 2)" is a fine opener, full of rhythmic and melodic interest, and no hackneyed ideas in evidence! "Balada" is a beautiful, dreamy work with a lovely melody and harmonies and should be in print for us all to enjoy. Full of fireworks from the outset, "Sobre um Tema de Gismonti" keeps your attention throughout; another fine piece, "Sinos do Paraíso (Bells of Paradise)" begins with said bells, before becoming a thoughtful melody over a rocking accompaniment.

The "Homenagem a Tedesco" speaks for itself, with its lilting waltz rhythms, catchy melodies, and constantly inventive ideas. "Ella's Jig" sounds almost Scottish, with its warm melodies and syncopated "Scottish snap" elements in the theme; and the jig itself is outgoing and great fun. "Passacaglia Coral" follows the Baroque form to the limits, with the circle of fifths going right 'round until it arrives back at the opening A minor for its close. After *Estudios 1 and 2*, which echo the techniques used by Villa-Lobos in his first two studies, the album finishes with the title track, "Despertar," an entertaining piece with glissandi and hammer-ons and pull-offs very much in the folk/rock tradition. Wonderful performances, a beautiful recording, and some fabulous music. What more could you want?

—CD



Royal Winter Music

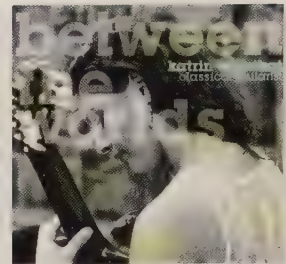
Otto Tolonen
 Alba

Heavy modern works demand much from player and listeners

Here is a CD with only two (or three) works on it, as we have both of the *Royal Winter Music* sonatas by German composer Hans Werner Henze (1926–2012) and, as an added bonus, Benjamin Britten's 1963 piece *Nocturnal After John Dowland*, both behemoths of the 20th-century guitar world—the Henze taking 57 minutes in total and the Britten a tad under 20. It is a brave player who decides to commit such landmark pieces to CD nowadays, especially when it is such challenging and at times dense material. Indeed, at one time the Britten was considered one of the heaviest modern guitar pieces, but it pales now in comparison to the nine movements of the Henze.

Royal Winter Music, for the uninitiated, is a set of two sonatas based on Shakespearean characters. It is highly demanding for player and listener alike. Henze was not a guitarist, so he had no preconceived notions as to what the instrument could or couldn't do. As a result, both sonatas are full of complex and some downright awkward passages, with many instances where the player's technical arsenal is pushed to extremes. Suffice it to say that Otto Tolonen has immersed himself into the sonatas' bizarre world to such an extent that what emerges is nothing short of brilliant. The *Nocturnal* has, of course, been recorded far more times than the Henze, but nevertheless is dispatched with consummate ease and musicality. Therefore, if (and that's a big if) you are in the market for a recording of these giant pieces, this one should do you fine.

—CD



Between the Worlds

Katrin Endrikat
katrinendrikat.com

A safe but expertly played selection of pieces

When a young performer releases a disc of already ubiquitous works, it's neither unreasonable nor unfair to speculate about the motives behind it. So it is with this debut offering from a Yale graduate who is several years short of her 30th birthday.

Of the pieces presented, *Variations sur un thème de Scriabine* by Alexandre Tansman is arguably the least explored. This colorful and unusually expansive example of Tansman's guitar writing was a "sleepers" at its time of creation in 1971–72; however, it has found favor in recent years with such high-ranking names as Marcin Dylla and Irina Kulikova. Elsewhere on the disc Endrikat fields such established fare as *La Catedral* by Agustín Barrios, the Lennox Berkeley *Sonatina*, Bach's *Suite in E minor* BWV 996, and three Isaac Albéniz favorites. All are extensively represented on existing recordings, both old and recent.

Perhaps a clue to the opening question lies in the performer's notes, in which she mentions having "often heard members of the audience asking me for a record after the concert." In other words, this is perhaps best seen as an honest example of the "sell-at-gigs" disc, targeted at those who wish to acquire a sound souvenir of the performance they have just witnessed. As such, it's a premium-grade specimen, with mature and technically assured interpretations of a familiar yet challenging program, expertly captured by engineer Eugene Kimball. Nothing radical is attempted, but each track exudes quality.

—PF

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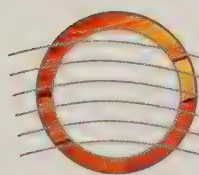
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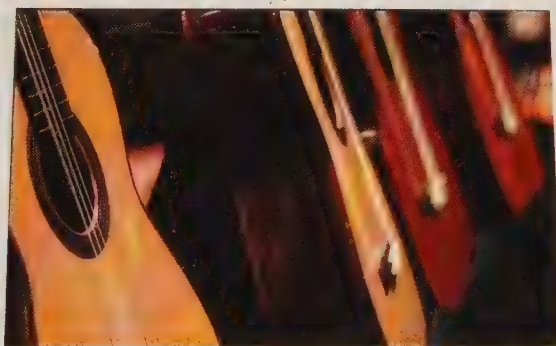
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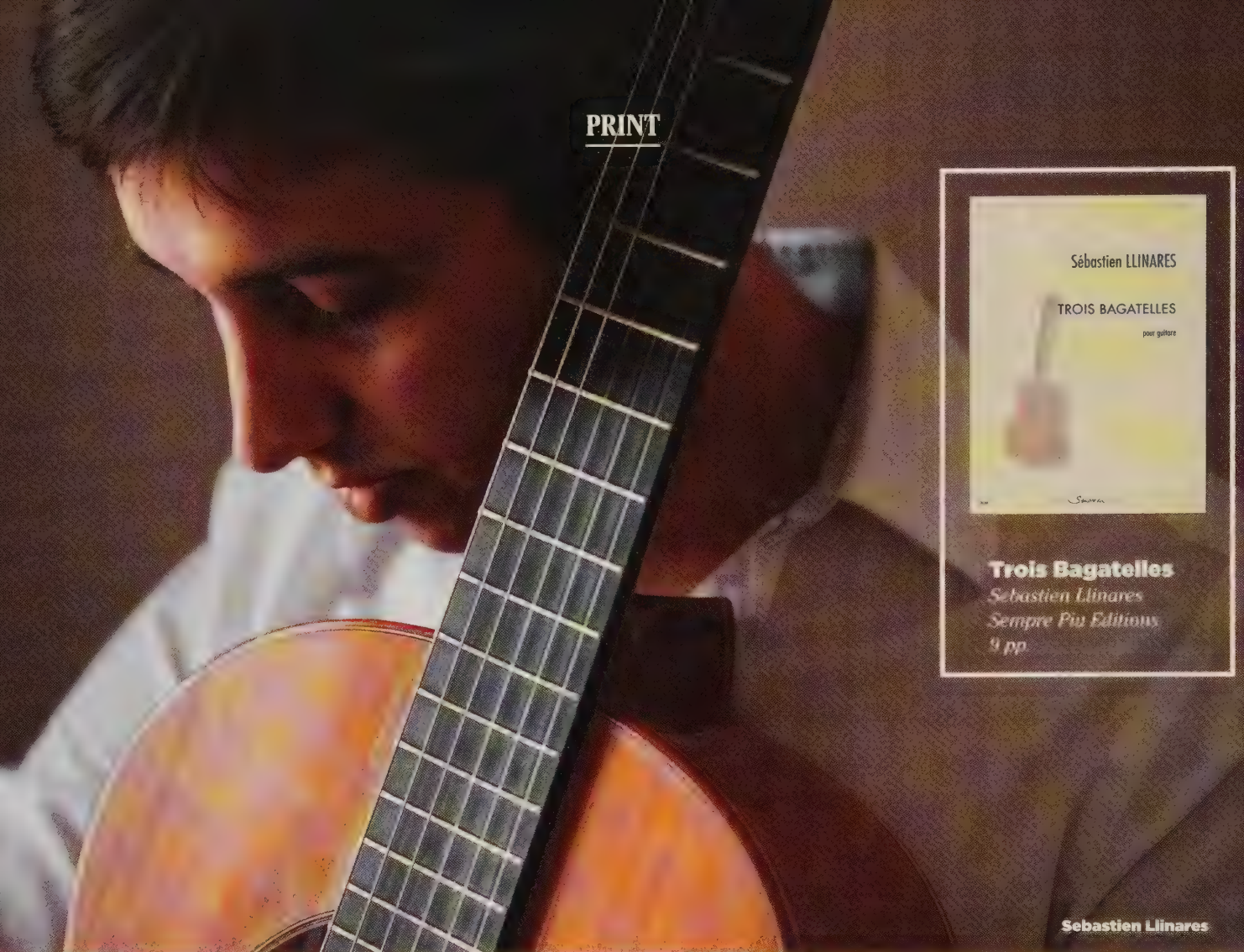
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Sébastien Llinares

ENIGMATIC BAGATELLES

There's nothing simple about this Sébastien Llinares offering

by Chris Dumigan

As “trifles” go, these three bagatelles are definitely on the weightier end compared to many others with that description. The first is capricious in character in spite of its *andante* marking. It begins with a little arabesque that repeats in various ways throughout the piece, marked “serene.” (Incidentally, the instruction markings are many and varied, and at times a little odd—including instructions for various phrases to be played “wisely,” “quite determined,” “resigned,” “humbly,” “exaggerated,” and more.) After the opening motif, various elements enter one after another, some quite briefly, and others in a more extended fashion, including a repeated-note clashing idea that becomes somewhat tedious. A strangely enigmatic chord sequence brings the movement to a close on a deliberately unusual chord that hangs unanswered in the air.

No. 2 has a free opening before accelerating into a lively, sixteenth-note-driven

138 quarter notes a minute. Plenty of cross-string clashing is evident here, before an increase to 160 beats a minute (still in sixteenth notes) takes over. A slower section then enters, where musical ideas jump in and out almost randomly before a chiming, repeated quarter-note idea interwoven with natural harmonics closes the piece.

The final piece has a high-voiced melody atop some melodic chords as an opener, marked “lightly,” and a little later, “very sweetly.” A brief interlude into artificial harmonics returns to parts of the opening idea before a tremolo theme emerges, then a brief coda, and it is over.

The pieces are modestly difficult to play and the harmonies friendly enough, but I was less than captivated by the musical ideas, which often didn't seem to be very involving. Still, interested players should give this nicely printed volume a look-see.



Carmen Fantasy (for four guitars)

Stephen Goss

Doberman-Yppan, 56 pp.

Goss brilliantly reimagines Bizet

Here we have one of my all-time favorite composers presenting a sideways look at some of the music from one of my all-time favorite operas, George Bizet's *Carmen*; so straight away we're onto a winning streak. Goss not only concentrates his attention on this French composer, he also incorporates passing references to other musicians who have drawn on Bizet's themes from this opera, including a couple of Bizet's contemporaries, Ferruccio Busoni and Pablo de Sarasate, and later ones, such as Vladimir Horowitz and Franz Waxman.

The five pieces—"Torero," "Habane-ra," "Aragonesa," "Seguidilla," and "Gypsy Song"—are crammed full of excitement, pathos, surprises, and of course, first-rate melodies. There are plentiful techniques required here, including harmonics, "banjo," pizzicato, tremolo, glissandi, foot stamp, and several percussive directions; all go toward making this a very special event indeed.

BBC Music magazine called this the "party-piece of the year," and anyone who has heard the Tetra Quartet's performance of it surely has to agree. Any quartet tackling this wonderful piece need to be superb musicians with exceptional technique. As with Goss' "re-arrangement" of three of Satie's *Gnossiennes*—also for guitar quartet (reviewed in *CG* Spring 2016)—there's plenty of his own personality and creativity shining through here.

Highly recommended. —Steve Marsh



Sonata Op. 17

Anton Stingl

Berben, 19 pp.

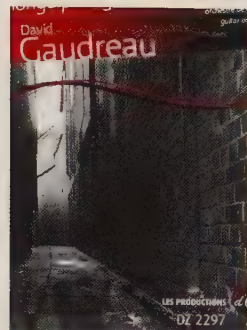
An important find from a reliable German composer

German-born Anton Stingl (1908–2000) wrote many works over his long life, but this Sonata is, I believe, new to the guitar world, and quite an important find. I can't be sure whether Stingl was a guitar player, though I doubt it, especially as the book refers to the sonata's revision by Cristiano Porqueddu, and also because the music feels a little un-guitaristic in spite of always being perfectly playable.

Set in three movements, the sonata has an "Allegro Moderato" first movement with a dropped-D sixth. It is all quite tonal, but unusually so, though the sonata form is always understandable. Very quickly we find ourselves in many positions and racing all over the strings, so anyone not fully familiar with the entire fingerboard will struggle. A preponderance of sixteenths and triplet sixteenths makes this quite a handful at times, but it is an exciting opening movement, if very tricky. A "Lento Espressivo" follows, slower, but no less difficult to handle. It moves from G minor to D and then back to G major to finally close on the opening key for a *tranquillo* coda. The final "Allegretto" in D major has an attractive dance element to it and finishes on some sonorous chords firmly set in D major.

This is altogether an attention-grabbing piece that requires a good player, but it is worth it to anyone who can cope with the difficulties.

—CD



Milonga para guitarra Alla Grande (for guitar orchestra)

David Gaudreau

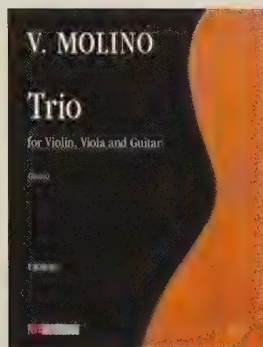
Les Productions D'Oz, 7 pp. plus parts

A sultry South-American-style ensemble piece

This is for four guitars and a contra in treble clef, so not really a "guitar orchestra" in the accepted sense—just an expanded quartet. Guitars One and Two have melody and counter melody, Guitar Three is mostly rolling a three-string arpeggio in 3:3:2 rhythm, and Guitar Four is providing a four-string arpeggio in 4:4 rhythm, so the two accompaniments provide a constantly changing texture to support the melody.

The sultry feel of the *milonga* (which originated in Argentina and Uruguay in the 19th century) is captured well, and there is nothing faster than eighth notes, so the piece locks together neatly. Set in A minor, Guitar Four is mainly in first position, and would suit a player with one to two years' experience. Guitar Three moves up the neck, and some arpeggios include an open top string, so the appearance on the page is a little more frightening than the reality of playing it. The top two parts use the whole of the neck but seldom venture onto the bass strings, so although a little more experience is needed here, the range of ability required is probably no wider than what is found in a typical school ensemble.

Much of the piece is repeated, so there are nearly 100 measures of music. Fingering is generous without being excessive, though checking out the positions is advised. With dynamics and accents plentifully placed on the music, this is a charming piece for a less-experienced ensemble, assuming they have a contra guitar. Still, definitely recommended. —Derek Hasted



Trio
(for violin, viola and guitar)

Valentino Molino, arr. Fabio Rizza
UT Orpheus, 25 pp. plus parts

**Pleasant chamber music from
unsung Italian composer**

This urtext edition isn't the Molino you might have dredged up from your memories (Francesco), but his cousin Valentino (1766–1824). This beautifully presented edition is taken from the only known copy of the *Trio*, in the Verdi Conservatory in Turin, and sets the story of Molino into historical context in a preface in Italian and English. The editorial alterations are minor, bringing such aspects as the dynamic markings and the beaming of short notes up to date and to the standards widely seen today. Short repeated passages have been typeset in full, rather than using abbreviations that the original hand edition would have found more economical. The guitar part originally had no fingering, but an editor has added small amounts of fingering here and there.

So the burning questions will be “How hard is it?” and “Is it a musically worthy piece?”

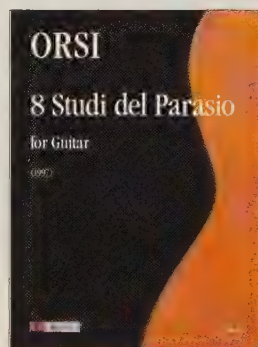
The complexity of all three parts looks broadly similar, (polyphony apart, of course) in terms of the speed of the music and the difficulty of the jumps around the neck, and there is nothing here that an intermediate guitarist would find insoluble.

The opening movement, “Allegro Amoro-,” is in E major, and though one might feel this is home territory to a guitarist, the writing is surprisingly chromatic, and there are plenty of double sharps, and also naturals, as the music pushes back and forth about its home key. The guitar part has that “continuo” feel, with endless repeated

chords, bits of filler arpeggio, and little bursts of solo, which tend to be acrobatic rather than amorous.

The adagio “Recitativo” in A minor (ending on the dominant) may move at a leisurely pace, but the beat is broken up into triplets and also 32nd notes, and is almost cadenza-like, and on the guitar part, there is a patch of full score, so the interplay is visible. The “Polonaise” in A major is really rather charming and fun to play on the guitar. A nine-measure adagio prefaces the “Rondo” in E major.

This is not a remarkable addition to our repertoire, but the choice of instruments and the complexity of the music make this a piece that may well get performed widely, and as such it shows the audience that the guitar isn't a maverick instrument, and that a long time ago, it shared in the making of pleasant chamber music. —DH



8 Studi del Parasio

Andrea Orsi
UT Orpheus, 14 pp. plus parts.

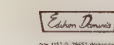
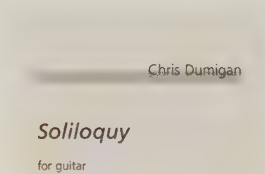
**Varied studies might pose
some difficulties**

Written in 1997, these eight studies are each one or two pages long, with no page turns. The first is a straightforward piece, primarily built on an octave scale in C. The second is chromatic, with close-packed notes in the melody, and a second part that is almost fug in form, starting underneath a few measures later. Many of the intervals are dissonant, and take the left hand into a strenuous workout, with fingers crossing from bass to tune and back. The initial stumbling block in the third was the footnote explaining the white square-headed notes, saying these are plucked between the left hand and the *capotasto* (the nut). So this is an arpeggio

study in which the right hand plays two identical measures, each side of a stationary left hand. Then the hand moves up a fret and we do the same. I'm not sure that this study is going to help me play anything else in my repertoire, and my guitar was crying out to me to stop the abuse I was giving it.

Study 4 has repeated three-note chords, and the string numbers under the first chord are unhelpfully in the wrong order. Under the chords comes a melody in natural harmonics. Study 5 is about double and triple slurs—specifically hammer-ons. Study 6 uses a mix of plucked and open strings up the neck to create a technical exercise that needs a bit of preparation to get it off the page and onto the fingers. Study 7 moves about the neck in two-, three-, and four-note chords. The final study is another slow chromatic contrapuntal exercise.

These didn't really energize me, and though there are good teaching points, it's all too easy to make mistakes and not even realize—surely the antithesis of a study. —DH



Soliloquy

Chris Dumigan
Edition Damini, 6 pp.

**Lyricism and rhythmic permutations
in an attractive piece**

The highly inventive English guitarist/composer (and *CG* writer) Chris Dumigan can always be relied upon to produce quality material when composing original works for guitar or in his arrangements of popular music (which has now reached a considerable number).

Written for the late German guitarist and publisher Norbert Dams, *Soliloquy* is an imaginative and very attractive piece. The work opens up with a gorgeously lyrical section (presumably “slow,” but not

PRINT

stated), which serves as an introductory chapter to the central section of the work, which has a quicker, dance-like quality drifting through various time-signatures, the use of which create many fascinating rhythmic permutations. The opening thematic material returns once again to conclude the piece in a calming fashion.

I have played through many pieces by this composer and for me this composition has to be one of his nicest achievements. It is ideally suited for the player of Grade Seven seeking new and attractive material.

Somewhat disappointing here is the actual visual aspect of the edition. With its poorly spaced-out bars, notes, and staves, the presentation of the score, although readable enough, is slightly inferior to that of many other publications. With a little more attention to detail, this music could have been much easier on the eye than it actually is, but don't let this put you off. —SM



Madrigale e Ballo Di Pian Dei Giullari (for two guitars)

Angelo Gilardino

Berben, score and separate parts (12, 8, and 7 pp. respectively)

Attractive but challenging piece for skilled duos

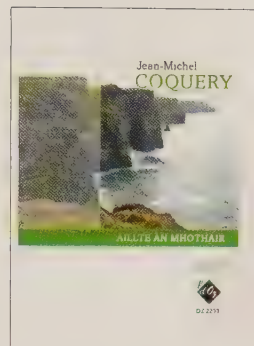
As one of the leading lights of modern guitar, Italy's Angelo Gilardino has produced a plethora of pieces over the years, including more than a dozen concerti, to name just one major group. This duet is in seven sections, all running together in one movement.

It begins with a "Dolce e Calmo" theme on Guitar Two solo, before it repeats, canon-style, in Guitar One two bars later. The music is immediately modern, but in an unusual modal-tonal style that is hard to categorize. The two parts are rhythmically

quite diverse and constantly go across each other, often using wide intervals. A second theme, which has a stop-go rhythm to it, then emerges on Guitar One, as the second guitar inserts off-beat accented chords. A variant of the opening idea then comes back, before a slightly faster section enters with a climbing arpeggio in Guitar Two and an accented chord theme above. Again, rhythms are frequently crossing over each other, making the piece somewhat tricky to play—especially as hardly any fingerings or string indications are given, and the music is so idiosyncratic that there are a few different ways it could be played. So, whether that means the composer doesn't mind how it is played as long as the actual notes are observed, I don't know.

This section soon makes way for a return to the opening speed, if not the actual identical themes, for a momentary respite until a new section marked *allegro carnascialesco* in 7/8 takes the tempo up several notches and both guitars are playing solo lines throughout. Shortly after that, another contrasting section (*andantino gentile*) presents a quiet, high-voiced melody accompanied by two voices in the other part, until the *allegro* makes a return, again completely in solo notes for both guitars. A final return to the opening *dolce* takes us once more through its rhythmic complexities before leading to a gradually quieting coda of harmonics.

With its wide note-leaps, multiplicity of rhythms, and nod toward the modal, this piece makes for an attractive duet that needs two decent players to give it the attention it deserves. But there are plenty of good duos around, and I can highly recommend this fine work for them. —CD



Aillte an Mhothair (for guitar sextet)

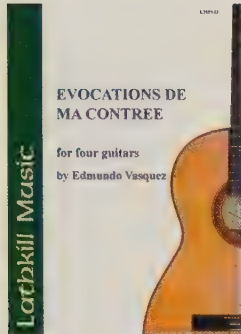
Jean-Michel Coquery

Les Productions d'Oz, 8 pp. plus parts

An aural trip to Ireland (and Spain)

The cliffs of Moher in County Clare (Ireland) are spectacular. Is this piece spectacular in return? Unusually for a sextet, it begins with a 16-bar self-contained solo from Guitar One, capturing at once the A minor-to-G jiggy 6/8 feel of so much Celtic music. But then something odd happens—along comes an F chord and then an E, and instantly we're in Spain. Unusual, too, is that the descending sequence D-C-B in bar 16 terminates with a rest—the A is given to Guitar Six—and if I were playing Guitar One, I would feel quite cheated at a *cadence interruptus*. But to be fair, that geographical chord fumbling doesn't occur again.

Here's another funny thing: There are 90 bars including repeats, but for more than half of them, at least one part is silent. On another 22 bars, two parts play unison. Given the task of finding enough players to form a sextet, one does have to ask whether full use is being made of all the team, and I believe this could easily have been slotted onto five guitars. I'm struggling with the fact that although this is a nice mixed-ability piece, the overall quantity of sound, on account of so many rests, isn't going to be as impressive as it could be. —DH



Evocations de ma contree (for four guitars)

Edmundo Vasquez
Lathkill Music, 32 pp. plus parts

Lovely and compelling suite inspired by Chilean music

Inspired by the dances and songs that characterize the traditional music of Chile, this substantial work was penned in France. Although the cover states “for four guitars,” the full score calls up three guitars and a requinto in A, at least for some of the pieces. And here’s where I got confused. The requinto is usually a transposing instrument, so I’d expect the music to be a fourth down and in one more sharp than the guitar parts, but it isn’t. Maybe the full score is at pitch and the part score is transposed? No, it isn’t. But the final movement has “rqto in real notes” on both the full and part scores.

I deduce that the requinto player is required to transpose in his head, and this is going to prove a massive obstacle to the marketing of this otherwise bold work, especially as the notes (at pitch) are so high they’re not easy to read. It would cost next to nothing to add a transposed part-score as a fifth part, and I hope this might happen.

“Cantando,” in 12/8, sees Guitar Four open with a lilting but rhythmic accompaniment. The rhythms are compelling, and imitated across the forces, and some of the chords will be familiar, although none are fingered. “Chant de l’Absence” is tranquil to start, but there are mood changes. Nothing is technically overpowering here, but there are occasional duplets in the 6/8 and it also switches in and out of 3/4 time, though without new time signatures.

“Nostalgique” is for four guitars with rasgueado and big chords among pungent

and rhythmic interjections. This is a particularly effective movement. The suite closes with “Rejouissance,” which is rhythmically much more challenging. The dissonances in this suite aren’t aggressive and there are some lovely sounds, but technically this is a work that can be realized only by accomplished musicians. —DH



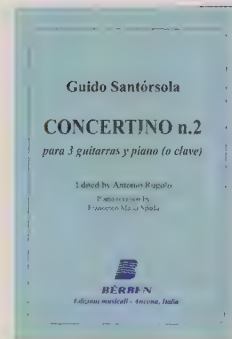
Lament

Pat Coldrick
Doberman-Yppan, 4 pp.

Sad piece is filled with beautiful moments

Having recently given a glowing review of a four-movement suite by Irish guitarist/composer Pat Coldrick, it delights me to say that this is another piece of the same ilk, albeit a much smaller offering.

“Lament” is taken from Coldrick’s first album, *Cayendo*, and is a charming, tuneful, and very attractive composition. The piece has an air of innocence and naïveté that permeates it, and it also lives up to its name, for this is a sad but beautiful little affair. There are very slight differences between this publication and the way in which the composer performs the piece, but these are negligible, and in any case it is quite easy to work out the changes. “Lament” is one of those wonderful rarities that come along every so often, and slots into the category of a beautiful piece of music without being too difficult (around Grade 5). This is one of the nicest pieces I’ve had the pleasure to review in a long time. —CD



Concertino No. 2 (for three guitars and piano)

Guido Santórsola

Tres En Raya (for guitar and strings)

Antonio Ruiz-Pipo
Berben Publications

Lots to savor and master in unheralded concertinos

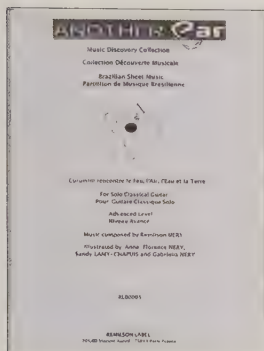
These two newly published concertinos come from famous guitar composers, both of whom died in the 1990s. The Spaniard Ruiz-Pipo, whose famous work “Cancion y Danza No. 1” is still a very popular recital work, is represented by a three movement work for guitar and strings in five parts (all six parts and score included). The opening is an “Energico,” constantly changing between 3/4 and 2/4, with plenty of syncopated rhythms and clashing mixtures of A major and B^b major chords from the outset. The chords change from then on, but the clashing style continues, even through a “Dolce” mid-section and a return of the original idea to close, ending on a dissonant chord of E, E^b, G, C, and A^b (bass to treble). The middle movement—“Cantabile”—continues the clashing style over a slower speed, while the final “Ritmico” mixes 6/8, 3/4, 2/4, and other time signatures to create some interesting rhythmic complexities, reaching a considerable climax and closing fortissimo. The guitar part is rather tricky, and sometimes not very guitaristic, but perfectly playable, given time.

The Italian-born Brazilian Guido Santórsola’s work for three guitars and piano was written in 1978 as a didactic piece to help pupils practice ensemble playing. It has four movements—“Alegre,” “Pastorale,” “Minue,” and “Finale”—and needs a very strong Guitar One

PRINT

player, in particular—less so for the other two—and is full of memorable ideas and intriguing interplay and harmonies.

Both works are representative of these composers at their finest, and it is heart-warming to realize that there are still new works of theirs to be discovered. —CD



Curumim Rencontre le Feu, l'Air, l'Eau et La Terre

Two Pieces (Children's and Vida De Criança)

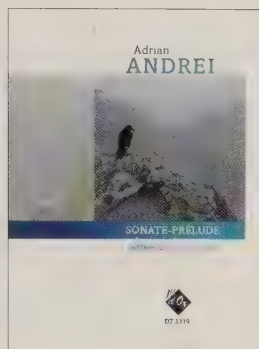
Remilson Nery
Another Ear

Evocative looks at the lives of Brazilian children

The Brazilian composer Remilson Nery was born in Rio de Janeiro (1961) and composes for many other instruments besides the guitar. The elaborate title of the first piece refers to a young Amazonian Indian boy named Curumim who, on his way to becoming a warrior, endures a rite of passage after he leaves his tribe for a number of days and encounters the four elements (fire, air, water, and earth). Each element is introduced by its own theme, and Curumim himself has an ambling, almost lopsided melody that recurs in between, similar in manner to the way the melody from *Pictures at An Exhibition* (Mussorgsky) keeps returning; therefore the piece is an unusual Rondo in format. This is an intriguing work that keeps the listener guessing right to the end.

The Two Pieces are to be played as a pair, and their somber style relates to the apparent murder of children in Nery's homeland. The incomplete title of the first piece (the missing word is "life") is meant to highlight this, and shares the same desolate

harmonic style as the second one, the title of which translates as "The Life of Children." Both works are somewhat rhapsodic but are nicely done and melodically interesting to play. Both would suit an intermediate player. —CD



Sonate: Prelude

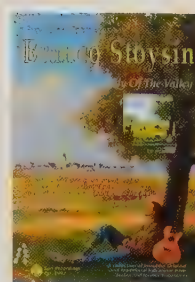
Adrian Andrei
Les Productions D'Oz, 8 pp.

Complex but satisfying piece with sonata elements

Romanian-born Adrian Andrei has written some fascinating music for guitar, from simple works based on his country's folk themes to very complex pieces. This new one is of the latter category. It is in one movement, and as the title suggests has certain elements of sonata form, and others that are definitely not. It begins allegro, with a dissonant chord and a theme that crosses between 4/4 and 2/4 in an unusual but tonal way. Another theme enters that is in constant flux before the original one comes back, at which point a more relaxed moderato idea starts up. Sudden dissonant chords herald the return of the allegro, itself a variation of the original, before a new version of the moderato theme. Finally the opening allegro idea is stated one more time in its original form, before a rising triplet idea brings in a firm close.

This is a nicely written, engaging piece that is "modern," but not too much, and is every bit as good as his other works I have played. —CD

(Editor's note: In last issue's "Print" review section, we listed the wrong publisher for Jim Ferguson's "Jazzotica." The publisher is Les Productions D'Oz.)



Lily of the Valley

Branco Stoyšin
Sun Recordings: book (51 pp.)
plus CD of contents

Warm, lyrical pieces based on Yugoslavian folk music

Here, Yugoslavian guitarist Stoyšin has produced 18 pieces based on traditional folk music from Serbia and Yugoslavia and set them for one, two, three, or four guitars, sometimes with a bass part too, and also includes a CD of himself multi-tracking the results.

The pieces all share a warm, lyrical sound and are immediately attractive. The notation is in a handwritten but perfectly legible style that is easy to get used to as long as you realize that the CD versions can, at times vary slightly from the printed scores. The music is more than pleasant, and well-written for the guitars and bass, too; so if you have a number of players who like something a little out of the ordinary, this well-produced book might fit the bill well. —CD



STAGE



Paco de Lucía
and nephew José María Bandera

A STIRRING TRIBUTE TO PACO DE LUCÍA

Former collaborators channel the spirit of the flamenco great

by Thérèse Wassily Saba

**Paco de Lucía:
Beyond the Memory.
Barbican, London.
December 30, 2015**

Flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucía had a virtuosic technique that stayed with him throughout his career. But alongside this was his perfectionism, his deep-rooted flamenco traditions, and a spirit that led him to cross musical boundaries and change the face of flamenco forever. Paco was respected, admired, and loved not only by his audiences throughout the world, but also by musical colleagues with whom he collaborated. None more so than the members of his Sextet, and many of these brilliant musicians were on the stage at the Barbican for this Paco de Lucía tribute concert: Flautist/saxophonist Jorge Pardo, bass player Carles Benavent, percussionist Rubem Dantes (who, with Paco, introduced the *cajón* into flamenco 35 years ago), the flamenco singer Duquende, the flamenco dancer Farru, percussionist Piraña, harmonica player Antonio Serra-

no, and on guitars, Paco de Lucía's nephews—José María Bandera and Antonio Sánchez. Paco's spirit was felt strongly as we listened to superb performances given by each of these musicians. The music was punctuated with excerpts from the film *Paco de Lucía—La Búsqueda*, and by Jorge Pardo talking about Paco and their work together.

The decision over which pieces to play must have been difficult. They began with a *colombiana* called "Monasterio de Sal," with the older nephew, José María Bandera taking on the challenging role of playing Paco's part. Intellectually, I knew it was unwise to expect a mini-Paco, but it was hard to turn off that switch in the brain. Both of Paco's nephews had performed with him. When I spoke with them before the concert, I recalled the wonderful Trio concert of Paco, José María Bandera, and



The other nephew, Antonio Sanchez

Juan Manuel Cañizares. Antonio Sánchez, who is much younger, said he had heard much about that trio and regretted that he was too young to have heard them perform (and unfortunately, they didn't record together).

In the next piece, Sánchez was featured with percussionist Piraña, and you could really hear the strong influence of Paco in his playing. The tango "Sólo Querio Caminar" and the *bulería* "La Tumbona"—like "Monasterio de Sal"—come from the groundbreaking 1981 recording *Sólo Querio Caminar*, which was the first album Paco made with his Sextet, which at that time included Jorge Pardo, Carles Benevent, and Rubem Dantes, and thus formally introduced the saxophone and electric bass into flamenco music.

Pardo spoke about the incredible musical experience they have all had, working with Paco for 35 years, and then played his "El Barranco del Tesoro," a haunting solo *taranta*—which is a flamenco style that he said he was taught by the legendary singer Camarón de la Isla and Paco.

The first half of the concert had featured the duo of flamenco/jazz pianist Chano Domínguez with the flamenco guitarist Juan José "Niño Josele" Heredia. They played pieces from the album they recorded together called *Chano y Josele*, a selection of jazz, pop, and flamenco pieces, released in homage to Paco a few months after his death: "Django" by John Lewis, "Because" by the Beatles, Michel Legrand's "Je t'attendrai" (from the film *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*), "Lua Branca" by Chiquinha Gonzaga, "Two for the Road" by Henry Mancini, "Luiza" by Tom Jobim, and "Rosa" by Pixinguinha. Niño Josele also played Chano Domínguez's "Alma de Mujer" solo, and Domínguez played Josele's "¿Es Estos una

Bulería?" solo, along with Paco's "Canción de Amor." They ended this concert-length first half with an improvisation on the second movement of the *Concierto de Aranjuez* by Joaquín Rodrigo. As Rodrigo often played slight improvisations of his own work on the piano, this version seemed absolutely right. The playing was inspiring from these two excellent performers; there were only issues of balance between the two instruments, with the piano sometimes drowning out the amplified sound of the guitar.

At the end of the evening, all the musicians performed together on a pair of brilliant rumbas: "Entre Dos Aguas" and "Rio Ancho."

In England there are usually strict rules about finishing time (last orders in pubs), but this concert ran on Spanish time and the musicians clearly didn't want to stop playing, and the audience didn't want to go home. It was as close as we could all get to having Paco de Lucía with us once more.

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FESTIVALS & COMPETITIONS

Ana Vidovic and Pepe Romero
will be at Le Domaine Forget



JUNE 3-5

Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival Cleveland, Ohio

The Cleveland Institute of Music hosts concerts, lectures, workshops, lessons, master classes, and a guitar exhibition. Artists include CIM's Jason Vieaux, Petra Polácková, Solo Duo (Matteo Mela & Lorenzo Micheli), Ricardo Gallén, Colin Davin, Nigel North. guitarsint.com

JUNE 8-11

JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition Buffalo, NY

Semifinals and finals of concert competition with Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. bpo.org

JUNE 11-12

Southern Guitar Festival and Competition Columbia, South Carolina

Four levels of competition, including solo, ensembles, different ages. Artists include Duo Amaral and Janet Grohovac. Also, lectures. southernguitarfest.com

JUNE 14-18

Classical Minds Guitar Festival and Competition Bellaire, Texas

The 12th festival features high school- and college-level competitions, workshops, lectures, student recitals, technique instruction, private lessons, and performances. Artists: Susan McDonald, Matt Palmer, Eddie Healy, Jeremy Garcia, Gohar Vardanyan, and artistic director Valerie Hartzell. classicalmindsfestival.org

JUNE 15-19

Boston GuitarFest XI Boston, Massachusetts

This year's theme is "Viva España!" Young Guitarists Workshop, master classes, concerts, competition, lecture/discussions, luthier expo, open mic. Musicians include fest director Eliot Fisk, Oscar Ghiglia, Grisha Goryachev, Joaquin Clerch, Adam Levin, more. bostonguitarfest.org

JUNE 16-19

New Mexico Classical Guitar Festival Albuquerque, New Mexico

At the University of New Mexico, concerts, workshops, lectures, master classes. Jorge Caballero, Tantalus Quartet, Calvin Hazen. newmexicoclassicalguitarfestival.org

JUNE 20-25

Guitar Foundation of America International Convention and Competition Denver, Colorado

Held at Metropolitan State University: Three levels of competition, concerts, master classes, technique classes, lectures, luthier/vendor expo, more. Jason Vieaux, Raphaella Smits, Benjamin Verdery, Duo Melis, Fabio Zanon, Thibaut Garcia, Aleph Guitar Quartet, et al. guitarfoundation.org

JULY 3-17

Le Domaine Forget Guitar Contest and Classes Saint-Irénée, Québec

Two-week program for advanced-level students, plus Young Guitarists program. Master classes with Ana Vidovic (week one) and Pepe Romero (week two); technique classes, private lessons, competition, etc. domaineforget.com/en/1/stages/guitar

JULY 6-9

East Carolina University Summer Guitar Festival Greenville, North Carolina

Master classes, workshops, lectures, concerts, recitals, competitions. Faculty: Jason Vieaux, Elliot Frank, Stephen Robinson, Isaac Bustos, Andrew Zohn, and more. ecu.edu/cs-cfac/music/guitar/workshop

JULY 6-11

16th New York Guitar Seminar at Mannes New York, New York

Concerts, master classes, interactive workshops, ensemble coaching, performance classes; all ages. Artists/faculty include Sergio Assad, Clarice Assad, Newman & Oltman Guitar Duo, Mariano Aguirre, Duo Montes-Kircher, Jennifer Trowbridge, others. mannesguitar.com

JULY 6-11

Classical Guitar Retreat Isle of Cumbrae, Scotland

Matthew McAllister hosts this remote but scenic gathering, featuring lessons, workshops, technical classes, and concerts with McAllister, Patrick Kearney, Amanda Cook, and Rene Izquierdo. cgretreat.com

JULY 8-10

Hamilton International Guitar Festival & Competition Hamilton, Ontario

Concerts, workshops, master classes, vendor showcase, lessons, etc. at the Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts. Artists include David Steinhardt, Eden-Stell Guitar Duo, Iliana Matos, Joseph Palmer, Kevin Manderville. guitarhamilton.com

JULY 14-17

Bath Guitar Festival Bath, England

One of the IGF's annual fests, this one takes place in the Chapel in the Bath Mineral Hospital. No details available at press-time. igf.org.uk

JULY 17-24

International Guitar-Festival Iserlohn Schwerte and Iserlohn, Germany

For the fest's 25th anniversary they've assembled an incredible lineup, including David Russell, the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, Pavel Steidl, Katona Twins, Rene Izquierdo, Johannes Möller, Roland Dyens, many more. Competitions, lectures, lessons, workshops, exhibition. guitarsymposium.de

JULY 19-23

Changsha International Guitar Festival Changsha, China

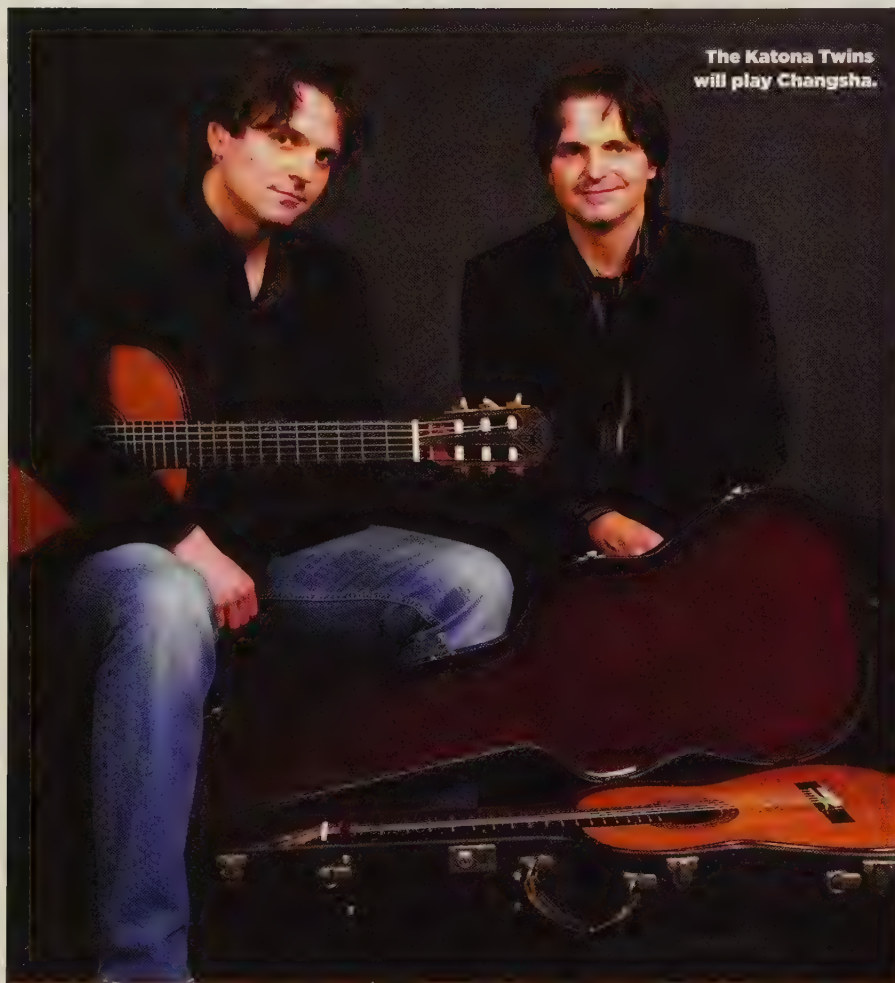
Competition pieces celebrating centenary of Granados and Ginastera. Also, composition competition, master classes, and concerts with Xuefei Yang, Nigel North, Katona Twins, Paul Galbraith, Zoran Dukic. xuefeiyoung.com/changsha

JULY 21-22

Sierra Nevada Guitar Festival & Competition Reno, Nevada

Adult and youth competitions; workshop/master class with Andrew York; performances featuring York, DuoSF (Christopher Mallett and Robert Miller), Philip Manwell, and Larry Aynessmith. At Trinity Episcopal Church. cgwest.org

FESTIVALS & COMPETITIONS



JULY 21-24

IGF Summit

London, England

Workshops, master classes, and concerts at King's Place. Tutors include Ana Vidovic, Hubert Kappel, Jim Mullen, Antonio Forcione, Justin Sandercoe, Dario Cortese, and more. Tom Kerstens leads the guitar orchestra. igf.org.uk/whats-on/gs

JULY 29-AUGUST 6

**Nürtingen International Guitar Festival
Nürtingen, Germany**

Competitions, lectures, master classes, concerts featuring David Russell, Rafael Aguirre, Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, Michael Langer, Rodrigo Guzman, Liying Zhu, et al. en.gitarre-nuertingen.de

AUGUST 6-13

**44th International Guitar Seminar
Reisbach, Germany**

Concerts, master classes, lectures. Andrew York, Virginia Luque, Aliosha De Santis. International Bach Guitar Competition is in Reisbach at the same time. gitarrenseminar.com

AUGUST 18-27

**Guitar Course/Festival en France
at Cheateau De Ligoure
Salignac-le Vigen, France**

Guitar lessons, master classes, orchestral and ensemble practice, workshops, lectures, and more in historic chateau. Teachers/concert artists include Gabriel Bianco, Eleftheria Kotzia, Eugenio Silva, and Raymond Gratien. guitairenfrance.org

AUGUST 20-26

**West Dean International Classical Guitar
and Summer School**

West Dean, West Sussex, England

25th anniversary celebration at West Dean College, with concerts, technique classes, lectures, master classes, workshops, and lessons. Tutors/performers include festival director Andrew Gough, Benjamin Verdery, Berta Rojas, Kai Nieminen, Manus Noble, Raymond Burley, Sean Shine, the Aquarelle Guitar Quartet, and Rebecca Baulch.

westdean.org.uk

AUGUST 22-28

**Forum Gitarre Wien
Vienna, Austria**

Courses, concerts, lectures, competitions, luthier exhibitions. Concerts at historic Grosser Ehrbar Saal. Artists/teachers include Marcin Dylla, Gérard Abiton, Alvaro Pierri, Nadia Jankovic, Kostas Amaxopoulos, Johann Jacob Niessen, more. forum-gitarre.at



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bamcases.com	57
Córdoba Guitars	
cordobamusicgroup.com	31
classicguitarstore.com	
classicalguitarstore.com	79
Classic Guitars International	
classicguitar.com	19
Classic Guitar Magazine	
store.classicalguitarmagazine.com	12, 83, 95, 99
D'Addario & Company	
daddario.com	100
ESP Guitars	
esptakamine.com	47
Finest Musical Instruments	
concert-classical-guitar.com	5

Greg Brandt	
gregbrandtguitars.com	79
Guitar Foundation Of America	
guitarfoundation.org	3
Guitar Salon International	
guitarsalon.com	13
Hill Guitar Company	
hillguitar.com	46
Ibanez Guitars	
ibanez.com	51
Kyser Musical Products	
kysermusical.com	23
London Guitar Studio	
londonguitarstudio.com	43
Luthier Music Corp.	
luthiermusic.com	7
Metropolitan State University of Denver	
music.msudenver.edu	91

Phoenix Guitar Company	
phoenixguitarco.com	79
RAGO Competition	
rago-competition.com	83
Roosevelt University	
roosevelt.edu	79
Savarez	
savarez.fr	40
Skinner Inc. Auctioneers	
skinnerinc.com	58
Soloette	
soloette.com	9
Strings by Mail	
stringsbymail.com	72, 83
The Classical Guitar Centre Ltd	
classicalguitar.co.uk	2
West Dean College	
westdean.org.uk	17

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Bach might have envisioned.'**

—SHARON ISBIN

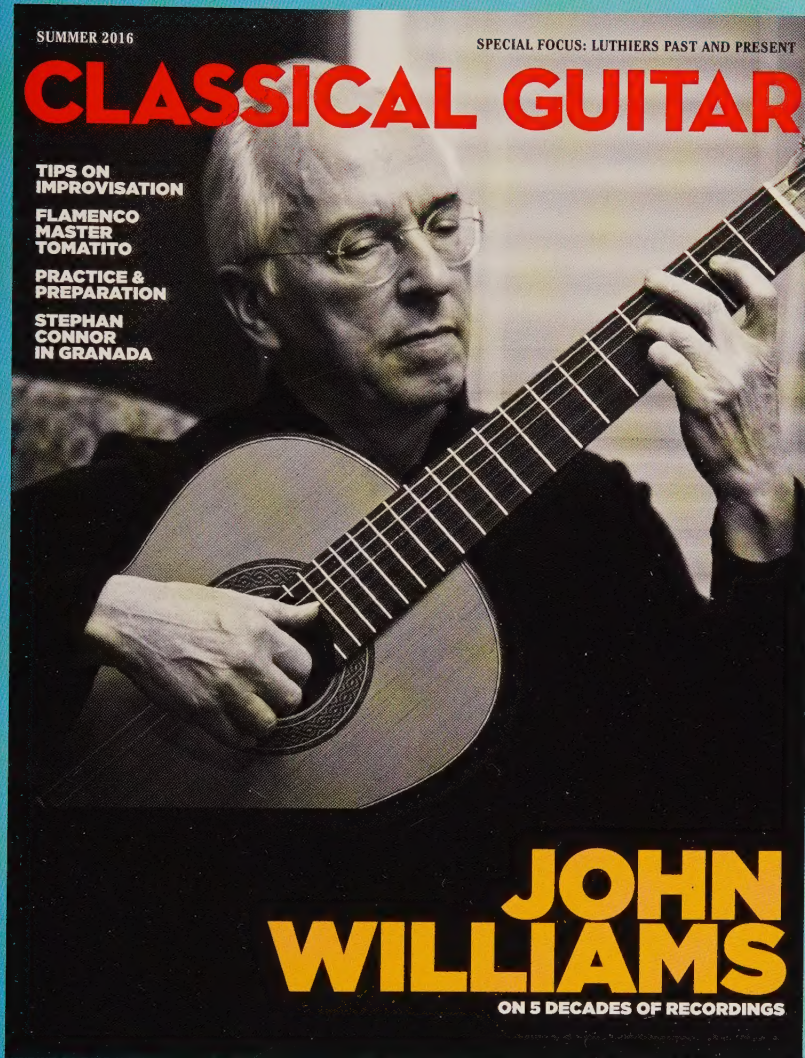
From an interview by Colin Cooper
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J. HENRY FAIR PHOTO

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